United Nations S/PV.8079

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

8079th meeting

Friday, 27 October 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Delattre/Mrs. Gueguen	(France)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Solíz
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	Italy	Mr. Lambertini
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Russian Federation	Mr. Zagaynov
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Ms. Wallström
	Ukraine	Ms. Klympush-Tsintsadze
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli

Agenda

Women and peace and security

Realizing the promise of the women and peace and security agenda: ensuring its full implementation, including the participation of women

Report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security (S/2017/861)

Letter dated 20 October 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2017/889)

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17-34962 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Women and peace and security

Realizing the promise of the women and peace and security agenda: ensuring its full implementation, including the participation of women

Report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security (S/2017/861)

Letter dated 20 October 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2017/889)

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Afghanistan, Albania, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belgium, Botswana, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Czech Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Ecuador, El Salvador, Georgia, Germany, Guatemala, Hungary, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Maldives, Mexico, Morocco, Namibia, Nepal, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, the Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Romania, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Viet Nam to participate in this meeting.

I extend a special welcome to all the ministers attending, including those representing Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Germany, Sweden and Ukraine.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General; Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women; Ms. Charo Mina-Rojas, NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security; and Ms. Michaëlle Jean, Secretary-General of the International Organization of la Francophonie.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I also invite the following to participate in this meeting: Her Excellency Ms. Mara Marinaki, Principal Adviser on Gender and the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security of the European External Action Service of the European Union; Ms. Amarsanaa Darisuren, Senior Adviser on Gender Issues of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe; Ms. Louise Sharene Bailey, Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Observer Mission of the African Union to the United Nations; and Mr. Krisztian Meszaros, Civilian Liaison Officer of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to the United Nations.

I propose that the Council invite the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of the Holy See to the United Nations to participate in the meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I propose that the Council invite the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine to the United Nations to participate in the meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/861, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security. I wish to also draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/889, which contains a letter dated 20 October 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept paper on the item under consideration.

I now give the floor to Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti.

Ms. Viotti: I thank the French presidency for highlighting the importance of the women and peace and security agenda. Let me start by expressing appreciation to the Security Council for its recent efforts to bring women's voices into the centre of its work.

Earlier this month, the Council heard the moving account of Joy Bishara, one of the young women kidnapped in Chibok by Boko Haram. Such testimony helps to deepen our understanding of the challenge. It also underscores the pressing need for more concerted and tangible action. In that spirit, today I will focus largely on prevention — a core pillar of the women and peace and security agenda and a key priority of the Secretary-General.

The links between prevention and gender equality are many and clear. Women are affected in distinct and distinctly negative ways by armed conflict and violence. Just as gender discrimination is a constant in peacetime, so it prevails when society collapses into war, with devastating impact. Women are the overwhelming majority of victims of rape used as a weapon of war, as well as of abductions and human trafficking. In urban warfare, they are at particular risk during house searches and at checkpoints. The lower women's status is in terms of health, wealth and education, the greater is their exposure to harm. Their underrepresentation in the justice and security sectors and in the upper echelons of political power likewise increases their exposure to harm. In turn, this extreme political marginalization undermines the potential of women as actors for conflict prevention — a vital role that the Security Council has emphasized repeatedly, including in resolution 2242 (2015) and the twin resolutions on sustaining peace (Security Council resolution 2286 (2016) and General Assembly resolution 70/262).

When the Council visited the Lake Chad basin earlier this year, local leaders all raised women's empowerment and its relationship with birth rates — which are among the highest in the world — in their discussions about root causes and solutions to the current crisis. When four senior leaders of the United Nations and the African Union, led by the Deputy Secretary-General, visited Nigeria together in the first high-level mission of its kind focused entirely on women and peace and security, they found that in spite of the presence of strong networks of women peacebuilders and activists, the views of women were underrepresented both in the military and in the humanitarian response. Recently, the Group of Women Facilitators in Guinea-Bissau — a network of civil society leaders — came together to defuse a potentially explosive political impasse and to open a communications channel between two main political leaders that had been closed for two years.

Indeed, there are countless women-led prevention initiatives that are either insufficiently supported or disconnected from national or regional early-warning mechanisms or decision-making bodies in general. The Secretary-General is strongly committed to promoting gender equality in the work of the United Nations for peace and security, and to fully integrating conflict gender analysis into that work. His Executive Office includes a Senior Adviser in policy at the level of Under-Secretary-General, with twin mandates on prevention and gender, who is working to ensure the linkages between the two. The Secretary-General's current visit to the Central African Republic aims not only to support the operation at this fragile moment, but also to witness first-hand how the new approach to preventing sexual exploitation and abuse is translating into changes on the ground.

The Secretary-General has also put forward a concrete plan to achieve gender parity across the United Nations. In this regard, we are farthest behind in our peace operations in crisis countries, where the role of women is often needed most. We are working with troop- and police-contributing countries to increase the number of female uniformed personnel. It is simply unacceptable that in 2017 only 3 per cent of our peacekeepers — the most visible face of the United Nations — are women.

We are also striving to increase the pool of women mediators. The recently established High-Level Advisory Board on Mediation is both high-level and gender-balanced. The new Office of Counter-Terrorism is integrating a gender perspective into its efforts to address this threat and prevent violent extremism, and proposals for the reform of the Secretariat's peace and security architecture must include a strong emphasis on strengthening the link between political strategies and gender expertise. Looking ahead, our efforts to strengthen the United Nations capacity for effective prevention will also include the following.

First, we will engage more systematically with women's organizations on the ground as natural partners for prevention.

Secondly, we will ensure that our prevention initiatives and monitoring include a focus on women's rights violations, including violence against women and girls, anti-women rhetoric, increased levels of militarization, shifts in the political marginalization of women or women's groups and strict enforcement of traditional gender norms, dress codes, segregation of the sexes or other steps that may not adhere to international human rights standards.

Thirdly, we will tackle the structural and root causes of crisis, including gender inequality.

Fourthly, we will strengthen the collection and analysis of gender statistics and encourage Member States to monitor gender-quality indicators as part of their work to implement the Sustainable Development Goals. Gender equality and the security of women are among the most reliable indicators of peace.

Fifthly, 17 years since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), our own implementation too often remains ad hoc. While there is clear recognition of the relationship between gender equality, women's participation and stability and resilience, too little is being done to operationalize that understanding. Starting next year, the Secretary-General's annual report on this issue will focus more on results and less on our own activities. I invite all participants to share their evidence, examples and impacts. Let use this opportunity to examine gaps and build on successes.

Implementing that vision will depend upon deepening our partnership with Member States, regional organizations and civil society. We look forward to working with participants based on their shared conviction that women's meaningful participation makes our peace efforts stronger and more sustainable.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Ribeiro Viotti for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka.

Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka: It is an honour to address the Security Council and to present the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/861) on women and peace and security. As mentioned by the Chef de Cabinet, the Secretary-General is currently in the Central African Republic. It is a pleasure to be accompanied today by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Navamanee Ratna Patten, who was part of our recent solidarity mission with the Deputy-Secretary-General to Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Together, we sought to enhance our joint support for the women and peace and security agenda in those countries.

The Secretary-General's report on women and peace and security celebrates progress and good practice and sets out his vision and recommendations. It also brings into the spotlight a number of alarming trends and setbacks. I am pleased to be here in the Chamber today with a Colombian activist who represents the many Colombian women who gave peace in their country a real chance. That is one example of the progress we have made. The United Nations has lauded their achievements and is following their lead, helping to implement a peace agreement with more than 100 provisions on gender equality. For example, the United Nations Mission in Colombia engages regularly with women's organizations and has a record percentage of women among its military observers — at 11 per cent, much higher than we have ever seen — with women representing 48 per cent of civilian staff.

Unfortunately, Colombia is an exception to the global practice, but one that we can follow. Although women's absence from peace tables is no longer easily brushed off as normal, it is still commonplace. Every year, we track women's overall participation in peace processes led by the United Nations, the the inclusion of gender expertise and gender-sensitive provisions in peace agreements, and the requirement to consult with women's civil-society organizations. On all of those indicators, we performed slightly worse than a year ago.

At the Union of Myanmar peace conference in 2016, before the current crisis, there were seven women and 68 men among the delegates. Recent peace talks on the Central African Republic hosted by the Community of Sant'Egidio did not include a single woman. Six years into the Syrian civil war, and in spite of significant efforts by the United Nations, partners and the Special Envoy, women's participation in the peace talks is still inadequate and often limited to an advisory role.

That political marginalization extends beyond peace talks. Only 17 countries have an elected woman Head of State or Government. That includes only one post-conflict conflict, namely, Liberia, where the presidency of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf just ended after two terms that included democratic elections and the peaceful transfer of power. That is something to celebrate. The proportion of women parliamentarians in conflict and post-conflict countries has stagnated at 16 per cent in the past two years. The use of quotas and temporary special measures would help. In Somalia, for instance, representation jumped to nearly 25 per cent, as compared with 14 per cent in the previous elections. In local elections in Mali at the end of last year, women represented 30 per cent of the elected candidates in

Bamako, Gao and Timbuktu, four times higher than the previous result.

Atrocities against women and girls in armed conflict have never been more thoroughly documented than they are now. International and national war crimes courts, commissions of inquiry, comprehensive mappings of human rights violations and documentation efforts led by civil society, expert investigators and reporters pay much closer attention to sexual and gender-based violence than ever before. The international community has more than enough evidence of these crimes in Syria, South, the Sudan and Central African Republic. In some of those places we have amassed the most extensive documentation of sexual and gender-based violence in history. What we do not have are consequences for the perpetrators and justice, dignity, and support for the survivors. That impunity should not continue.

The international community is reaching hundreds of thousands of survivors with assistance and programmes, which did not exist one or two decades ago. But many more cannot be reached owing to lack of resources, access and security. Many organizations, including UN-Women, participate in those efforts. I appreciate the work that has been done by the United Nations Population Fund with regard to women's reproductive health and gender-based violence survivors in some of those complex emergencies.

The consequences of war on women and girls go beyond sexual violence. In conflict and in natural disasters gender inequality compounds the many obstacles to accessing food, water, sanitation, hygiene, health care, education, employment, housing and legal identity. Child marriage in Yemen is estimated to have increased from 32 to 52 per cent, with a significant minority of girls being married before they are 15 years old. The percentage of female-headed households tripled during the current crisis, and those households have significantly lower incomes and more food insecurity. The percentage of Yemeni women who are illiterate was projected to reach two thirds, quickly erasing the hard-won gains in education and literacy, which took decades to achieve.

The maternal mortality rate in Nigeria is almost 10 times higher in the conflict-affected north-east than in the south-west. Often, that is the result of the destruction or closure of medical facilities due to insecurity. International non-governmental organizations providing specialized services on reproductive health and clinical management of rape recently left the Central African Republic because they could not protect their aid workers. A maternity hospital in Hama, Syria, was attacked at least 10 times, and finally put out of service in April of this year. Only a few months ago, we celebrated the release of 82 of the Chibok schoolgirls, most of whom are now young women, after more than three years in captivity. They are being supported with extensive trauma counselling, medical care, educational support, child care, and allowances for personal upkeep and family visits. UN-Women is glad to be part of that process. The Council had the opportunity to hear directly from one of the escapees two weeks ago and everyone in the room was visibly moved by her testimony. We must do something to find the girls who are still missing.

At a time when mass abductions, trafficking, forced recruitment and radicalization are the common tactics of violent extremist groups, we have much to learn about the rehabilitation and reintegration of returnees and their children. The Council has debated peacekeeping reform multiple times over the past year alone. Peacekeeping operations are one of our most important tools and the face of the Organization in many corners of the planet. We have been calling for more women in peacekeeping for 17 years. Now, the numbers are still very low. We have been trying to stamp out sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers for almost as long, and we have fallen short at every turn. Thankfully, the Secretary-General is taking that issue very seriously, as we can see by the current developments. This damages our effectiveness and our reputation, if we are unable to cross the line.

I welcome all the measures put in place to change that, which are detailed in the report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security. I encourage the States Members of the United Nations to consider using all the tools at their disposal, from conditions to financial incentives. It is encouraging to see the reduction in the number of allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse in the Central African Republic, recent improvements in victim support and assistance and that a culture of accountability is taking hold. It is dispiriting, however, to see gender advisory posts being lost or downgraded due to cuts in the peacekeeping budget. Gender should not be cut first whenever budgets must be managed, and for very good reason.

This is a time when we need more gender expertise and capacity in our missions and country teams, rather than less. For example, both the United Nations and the Security Council agree on the importance of gender and conflict analysis. We are committed to collaborating with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and United Nations partners and to ensuring that that analysis is reflected in mission planning, mandates, budgets and drawdown. It is equally crucial for our prevention work, as gender equality is one of our most reliable indicators of peace.

The Peacebuilding Fund again exceeded the minimum 15 per cent target in 2016 and allocated 19.2 per cent of funds to gender equality and women's empowerment as a principal objective. That is something to celebrate. I call on all donors to reward the Peacebuilding Fund's good track record in financing and driving innovation in gender-responsive peacebuilding, and to continue supporting this vital instrument of United Nations work. The instrument works well. The 15 per cent standard should be adopted by donors in their bilateral and multilateral cooperation, and by multi-partner trust funds in conflict-affected and fragile settings, such as that proposed for Liberia upon withdrawal of the mission.

With more resources, the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, the only United Nations fund dedicated solely to women, peace and security, will be able to support women's organizations in many more places, from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Iraq to Somalia and to Palestine. Women in those countries should not be left to their own devices when we have instruments to support them. Women's human rights defenders are under tremendous attack and we do not have enough to protect and support them. They need all our support and the support of the Council. The least we can do is to protect their space to speak out and raise their voices.

I would like to applaud the Council for regularly inviting women from civil society organizations to brief it when discussing specific countries. I call upon all members to support the new practice — a commitment the Council adopted in resolution 2242 (2015). I also applaud other innovations in the Council's work, such as the adoption of the first-ever resolution devoted solely to addressing sexual exploitation and abuse, and human trafficking and sexual violence and their intersection with violent extremism, as well as the work of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security. But the Council can and should do more to put its full political weight behind the implementation of the agenda.

In closing, we can build on the progress we have made. The annual report of the Secretary-General has many examples of the international community's will to find alliances and form coalitions in pursuit of the protection and empowerment of women. The regional roster of women mediators has been established. The African Women Leaders Network is one example of the ever-stronger cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union on this issue, which has also been supported by Germany. A total of 68 countries in our territories have adopted national action plans, and 63 countries are now part of the new women and peace and security national focal points network. We know that with more resources we can do more, as we have seen with the Peacebuilding Support Office.

We have expanded our work on preventing violent extremism to over 25 projects across several countries and regions. More than 60 countries, international and regional organizations and non-governmental organizations have united through the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies. A total of 122 countries voted to adopt a historic Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and women-led groups rightly received the Nobel Peace Prize for their tireless campaign and organization efforts, which is another major achievement.

There are some encouraging signals for gender justice in the international courts, despite some of the challenges we face. Only a few days ago, the Economic Community of West African States court in Banjul set a significant precedent by making its first-ever judgment on the violation of the Maputo Protocol, which is an important provision for addressing gender equality in Africa.

The women and peace and security agenda continues to expand its footprint on global policymaking. It is now an essential pillar in global affairs but its advocates and champions are animated by the conviction that it is only the beginning. I share that conviction. The chorus of voices that are appalled by the persistent political marginalization of women in decision-making is becoming louder. The number of people who are determined to find solutions to the human suffering caused by conflict is growing. This agenda unites us because people from all over the world, every day, look up to the United Nations for peace, equality and inclusion.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka for her briefing and commitment.

I now give the floor to Ms. Mina-Rojas.

Ms. Mina-Rojas (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Afro-descendants of Colombia's ancestral regions, I bring warm greetings of life, joy, hope and freedom. I am present at today's meeting in my capacity as a member of the human rights team of the Proceso de Comunidades Negras, the Red de Solidaridad Afro-Colombiana, la Alianza Negra por la Paz and the Instancia Especial de Alto Nivel con Pueblos Étnicos. I am also speaking on behalf of the non-governmental organizations working group on women, peace and security.

I am an Afro-descendant woman and a peace and human rights activist. I have spent half of my life raising awareness about and fighting for the cultural, territorial and political rights of Afro-descendant women and our communities, and for our self-determination. It is an honour and a great responsibility to have been nominated by my colleagues around the world to represent the women and peace and security civil society and community at today's important debate. As spokesperson for the Afro-Colombian Peace Council, I was extensively involved in the historic Havana peace process between the Colombian Government and the guerrilla group Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC), and I advocated for the rights and expectations of Afro-descendant peoples to be part of the peace accord that Colombia and the world are celebrating today. I can speak first-hand to the importance of inclusive negotiations and implementation processes that support the participation of women and groups from ethnically and racially diverse backgrounds, in reflection of the principles underlying resolution 1325 (2000). Columbia has become a fresh source of hope because of the comprehensive peace accord that was reached.

Two provisions were particularly progressive, though we had to push that door really hard. Those two provisions could radically change future peace processes around the world. The first is the explicit inclusion of a gender perspective as an intersectional principle, and the second the inclusion of the ethnic chapter, which provides important safeguards to ensure respect for the autonomy of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples and the protection and promotion of their rights from a gender, family and generational perspective. The inclusion of these two specific principles is a historic advancement in the area of peace and security from which the United Nations and other countries experiencing violence and armed conflict could learn. The peace accord was very important for civil society, women, indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples and our communities. We continue to expect that its implementation will include our engagement and active participation of women.

Colombia, however, risks wasting this opportunity for peace if it does not completely disarm and if the communities most impacted during the internal armed conflict, including women, human rights leaders and activists, continue to be ignored in the implementation of the peace accord. I am here today to make visible their urgent calls and wish to stress that for my people, this is truly a matter of life and death.

I should like to focus on three urgent priority areas: the participation of ethnically diverse women; ensuring the security of human rights defenders, civil-society activists and indigenous and Afro-descendant communities; and the inclusive monitoring and implementation of peace processes.

First is ensuring the ongoing participation of women, in all areas related to the implementation of the peace accord, with a focus on diversity. As with women around the world, women in Colombia, and particularly Afro-descendant women, have been mobilizing for decades to make visible the violations of our rights but also to ensure significant transformations in the way peace and security is approached.

My dear sister Rita Lopidia, from South Sudan, was here last year (see S/PV.7793) and gave testimony on the importance of South Sudanese women participating in the ongoing peace and security dialogues. In Afghanistan, the few women on the High Peace Council must continue fighting to have their voices heard. In Colombia, there is no representative of Afro-descendant women on the High-level Body on Gender, the body established to oversee the implementation of the accord's gender chapter.

As the parties to the peace accord work with the international community to demobilize FARC fighters, paramilitaries and other armed actors have filled the power vacuum left by FARC forces in many areas in Colombia. This has created an urgent need for local women's organizations and community leaders to be consulted and to participate in the design of local protection strategies aimed at keeping our communities safe.

The Security Council and the international community must support the Colombian Government in the process of designing and implementing gender-responsive, community-based security and self-protection systems, in consultation with Afro-descendant and indigenous communities. The failure to listen to our security concerns and warnings has had devastating results.

(*spoke in English*)

We believe that to listen and comply is vitally important.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

This brings me to my second point: the need to guarantee our integral and collective security. Security involves the safety of our leaders and communities and respect for and the protection of territories and territorial rights. The proliferation of weapons is fuelling increased fear and forced displacement among largely indigenous and Afro-descendant communities and negatively impacting women's participation and mobility, as well as resulting in increased sexual and gender-based violence. We are alarmed at the increasing number of assassinations and threats to human rights defenders and peace activists across Colombia.

For example, in Tumaco, a municipality near the border with Ecuador, urban leaders and members of the Community Council of Alto Mira and Frontera continue to be targeted by paramilitary groups and FARC and other dissidents who seek territorial control in order to grow and sell coca. Just last week, we buried our brother Jair Cortés, the sixth leader killed in that municipality, and we had to urgently move out several women leaders and their families who had received death threats.

Sexual and gender-based violence and the stigmatization that comes with it, especially for indigenous and Afro-descendant women and their children, is also a matter of integral and collective security. The silence around these crimes is as appalling as the crimes themselves. Women activists risk their lives to bring cases to justice. There is an urgent need to establish a direct line of communication between indigenous and Afro-descendant authorities and representatives of women's organizations in all mechanisms of the Comprehensive System for Truth, Coexistence, Reparations and Non-Repetition to ensure that these cases are prioritized, the perpetrators are brought to justice and survivors provided with life-saving medical and psychosocial services.

Finally, it is crucial that the framework plan for the implementation of the peace accord include specific goals and indicators designed to measure the progress and outcomes of policies, programmes and reforms in a manner corresponding to the needs, values and rights of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples. It is critical that the Colombian Government and its implementation commission accept and integrate the ethnic perspectives and indicators, including specific gender ethnic indicators, developed and provided to them by indigenous and Afro-descendant organizations earlier this month. Political will on these indicators is needed, and they must be included in the legal framework of the peace accord. They will help effectively transform the wartime conditions that are hampering the well-being, social development and collective security of indigenous and Afro-descendant women and our communities.

For Afro-descendant women in Colombia and indigenous women leaders worldwide, ensuring our collective security also means that the principles of free, prior and informed consent and consultation; autonomy; cultural integrity and meaningful participation are respected, and that our rights, as enshrined in national and international human rights standards, are fully promoted and protected.

Peace in Colombia and elsewhere is not simply a matter of ending war and violence but also of addressing collectively the root causes of conflict, including social, gender and racial injustice, and promoting the well-being of all peoples, of all races and religions. It is key to support the efforts of local women activists to demilitarize and disarm all our societies and to stem the flow of small arms, as set out in the Arms Trade Treaty and other legal instruments.

It is the responsibility of all actors, including the Security Council, the United Nations system, regional and subregional organizations and, importantly, Member States, to fulfil their obligations. The women and peace and security agenda, if implemented and financially resourced, can be a path to peace in my country and around the world, with gender equality, women's empowerment and the protection of women's rights playing a central role in conflict prevention and the creation of a sustainable peace.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Mina-Rojas for her briefing and her commitment.

I now give the floor to Ms. Jean.

Ms. Jean (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I should like to commend France for its initiative to convene today's high-level open debate. I am particularly grateful to you, Sir, for inviting me here to reiterate, for the second time, the crucial importance of the implementation of the provisions of resolution 1325 (2000), of 31 October 2000, as well as resolutions that have complemented it year after year.

Seventeen years ago, we agreed to turn obvious truths into words. Seventeen years ago, we agreed to recognize the importance of women's participation, on an equal footing with men, in the areas of crisis prevention, mediation and the maintenance and strengthening of peace and security.

Let us start by recognizing that women did not wait for the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) to translate these truths into action. We saw it in Liberia. Ms. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was one of those women who stood up to the warlords and mediated between the warring parties. We saw it in Bosnia. Within communities, women are always the first to seek reconciliation and return. We saw it in Rwanda. Women who had been physically harmed took the lead in reconciliation and reconstruction efforts at the local and national levels. In Mali, as everywhere else, when women get to the bargaining table, their influence is real and they achieve noteworthy results.

I am also thinking of the Ouagadougou Preliminary Agreement of April 2012, which was written by four women who had initially not been invited to speak. However, faced with their insistance and the value and content of their proposals, they ended up being admitted to the negotiating table — yes, admitted without having been officially invited.

Those are just a few examples among many that speak to the real capacity of women and all the forceful actions they take every day that contribute to peace and security and that are wrongly overlooked. And that is without counting the achievements of women engaged in peacekeeping operations. I remember listening with the greatest admiration to cohorts of women trained in Ghana and Mali at the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre, whose closure in 2013 I bitterly deplore.

How many resolutions, studies, meetings of independent high-level groups and groups of experts must there be before we do away with that abyssmal and unacceptable figure of 9 per cent of women participating in some 30 major negotiations over the past 25 years? I ask myself: What are we afraid of? Being more effective? It has been shown that women's participation increases by 20 per cent the probability of reaching a peace agreement that will last at least two years, and by 35 per cent the chances of reaching a peace agreement that will last 15 years.

We — international organizations, States and Governments, together with civil society — must commit ourselves resolutely to identifying and mobilizing women in a more systematic and coordinated way to sit at all negotiating tables and lead or take part in dialogues and national processes. That is also one of the central recommendations of the Abidjan seminar on the promotion of women's participation in peace processes in Francophone Africa, which we organized almost a year ago, in partnership with UN-Women and the Francophone Network for Gender Equality. Our countries, our networks are full of remarkable women. Let us mobilize them.

What are we waiting for to put an end to the derisory and unacceptable figure of 3 per cent of women participating as military personnel of United Nations missions? What are we afraid of? Being more productive? It has been shown that the presence of women in those sectors contributes to improving security forces and increasing the credibility of missions, especially in their dealings with the population. Women inspire confidence.

The Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) holds fast to the commitment, undertaken at the Francophonie Summit in Dakar of 2014, to investing in women and young people, who are the vectors of peace and development actors. Our organization, which has been involved for more than 15 years in strengthening the French-speaking contribution to United Nations peacekeeping operations, is also mobilizing on the ground in order to encourage the participation of female staff in missions and to train security forces in women's rights.

I will insist in a few days on all of these points at the Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial in Vancouver, Canada. OIF will once again sensitize its members to that problem at the meeting that we are organizing in the framework of the Boutros-Ghali Observatory in late November in Paris, in partnership with the United Nations. I do not want to see us forget the rule of law dimension, because the banalization of excessive State violence against citizens, the climate of impunity and the persistence of areas of lawlessness also affect the women and peace and security agenda.

It is clear that we need to do more. We must do more for women's economic and social integration, because peace, stability and security also depend on shared and inclusive economic development. That is the message that I will bring in five days to Bucharest, where the World Forum of Francophone Women will be held under the the theme, "Creation, innovation, entrepreneurship, growth and development: Women make their mark!"

We also must do more to fund women and peace and security. What is the point of pleading our case if the sums granted to fragile States to address issues of equality between women and men still represent only 6 per cent of the total aid package and only 2 per cent of aid reserved for peace and security, not to mention the funding rate for local women's organizations, including women's rights organizations, which could be described as miniscule?

We must do more to guarantee the full recognition of all forms of discrimination and crimes against women, which are crimes against humanity. We must do more to end impunity. How can one imagine genuinely recognizing the role of women as vectors of peace while leaving unpunished those who trample their bodies and dehumanize them? Year after year, resolution after resolution, we agree to put into words the horrors that are inflicted on women by men, even more cruelly and more systematically in times of hostilities, conflicts and war. It is primarily women who are targeted when men decide to annihilate a people or a nation. The abduction and rape of women, girls and little girls have become weapons of mass destruction and their bellies have become battlefields.

I cannot forget the tears of the seven year-old girl, her mother and all the women tortured by militiamen in the Goma region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where I visited in 2010. And what is happening these days? We see massacres in Kasai province and hear stories of mutilated women, some of whom them pregnant, who are found disemboweled. It is unbearable.

I am thinking about what happened to women in the neighbouring countries of Rwanda and Burundi. I am thinking of the thousands of refugee women in the Niger, on the border with Nigeria, 70 per cent of whom have fallen prey to Boko Haram and been subject to the most horrendous attacks. Lest we think that it is merely a question of Africa, I would say that it is not. Barbarism and inhumanity know no borders, And when there are reports of sexual abuse by United Nations personnel, the facts are equally damning. The men in this Chamber today are commended for not looking the other way and for resolutely supporting us.

Today's meeting provides us with an opportunity to affirm a real desire to act together, to continue to act and to do more. Let us take up the challenge of ever-increasing consultation and synergy of efforts. This is what we decided, the four women leading, respectively, OIF, the Ibero-American General Secretariat, the Commonwealth and the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, which comprise 167 States and Governments, or 61 per cent of the world's population. This strategic alliance also exists to serve the women and peace and security agenda, because nothing without women is or ever will be possible.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Jean for her briefing and for her commitment.

I now give the floor to the members of the Security Council who wish to make statements.

I call on the Vice-Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration of Ukraine.

Ms. Klympush-Tsintsadze (Ukraine): First of all, I would like to thank the delegation of France for scheduling this traditional Security Council debate on the issue of women and peace and security. I would also like to express my gratitude to Secretary-General António Guterres for his clear commitment to the women and peace and security agenda, and to the Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, for her briefing and for her tireless efforts to ensure that this agenda is kept in focus for the whole world.

Earlier this year, both the Secretary-General and the Executive Director paid visits to my country. My delegation greatly appreciates their tireless commitment to women's rights and empowerment, and we pay tribute to their continued efforts and support for Ukraine in its pursuit of peace and security. I am glad to report that two important initiatives were launched in Ukraine during these visits: "The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in Action" and "Gender Equality at the Centre of the Reforms". These two initiatives were made possible by the financial contributions of the Governments of Canada and Sweden, which we highly appreciate.

War and conflicts are devastating communities across the world today. In recent years, we have also seen widespread targeting of women and girls in conflict zones. Since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), the women and peace and security agenda unfortunately remains relevant and critical in the face of rising violence, extremism and deadly conflicts. Seven Security Council resolutions have been adopted, recognizing and outlining that conflict affects women and men differently and that women have critical roles to play in peace and security processes and institutions.

Ukraine strongly believes that the Security Council should continuously reinforce the importance of implementing existing women and peace and security resolutions and overcoming the gaps identified in the 2015 global study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), as well as in the policy brief entitled "Mapping women, peace and security in the Security Council: 2016". Admittedly, in 2017 the Council has improved inclusion of women, peace and security provisions on all relevant agenda items. In this context, we reiterate our support for the Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security, which has promoted gender mainstreaming in the work of the Security Council.

Law enforcement, security forces and peacekeeping missions mandated to protect civilians must do a better job of seeking out and listening to the needs of women and giving priority to their participation and protection. The international community must pay sufficient attention to providing and delivering the necessary protection for women in conflict-affected areas, in parallel with ensuring meaningful participation by women, so as to ensure complementarity between both pillars. The deployment of senior gender advisers and senior women's protection advisers is therefore critical so as to ensure that missions have sufficient gender expertise, authority and capacity to address those objectives.

A growing body of evidence had shown that perhaps the greatest but most under-used tool for building peace is the meaningful inclusion of women. That is one of the highlights of the global study's findings. The participation of women at the peace table improves the negotiation process, contributes to a more comprehensive peace agreement and bolsters the prospect of sustainable peace. It gives an important window of opportunity for setting an agenda for sustainable peace that includes the needs of an oft-excluded half of the population.

While examples of women's involvement in community-based peacebuilding abound, their participation in peace processes continues to be limited. This is a problem not only for the 1325 (2000) agenda and its advocates but also for peacemakers and all those who seek peace. That is why the topic of today's discussion put forward by the delegation of France is of great importance.

Ukraine recognizes the importance of equal and full participation of women in all activities for the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peacebuilding and peacekeeping. I am proud to say that in the past two years, during which Ukraine has been a member of the Security Council, resolution 1325 (2000) has been our great and long-standing daily priority. I would like to take this opportunity to share some improvements that my country has made in the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), specifically with regard to its pillars on participation and protection, as well as to highlight the challenges that remain, unfortunately, to be addressed.

In 2016, the Government of Ukraine adopted its national action plan for implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) for 2016-2020. Through implementation of the plan we have been working to bring about greater participation of women in decision-making in the areas of national security and defence and peacemaking, and to ensure the protection of women and girls and prevention and response to gender-based violence. The implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) is also a constant feature of our annual national cooperation programmes with NATO. Experience and best practices of NATO countries are examined and included so as to promote enhanced gender culture in the national security sector in Ukraine. Moreover, this year our Government has taken the decision to bring gender equality to the highest levels of the Cabinet of Ministers of the country. Indeed, it was given the highest priority when a Government Commissioner post on gender equality was established.

The Government has also developed the State target programme on recovery and peacebuilding in eastern regions of Ukraine, which integrates a gender perspective in all of its pillars. Our Government integrates women, peace and security in ongoing security and defence reform. With the support of UN-Women, we have just accomplished a comprehensive gender-impact assessment of the security sector and will soon adopt a multi-year gender-equality strategy for security and defence. These efforts aim to comprehensively integrate gender-equality and women's rights perspectives in all areas of security and defence reform.

Over the past two years, Ukraine has achieved progress in improving its recruitment policies, which resulted in a steady increase of the number of women working in the security and defence sector. Yes, the numbers are still not ideal. However, women already make up 10.6 per cent of the armed forces of Ukraine, 6.2 per cent of the national guard, 17.3 per cent of the national police and 24 per cent of the State border guard service. Currently, more than 10,000 women serve in official combat positions in Ukraine. The numbers continue to grow as a result of Government action to repeal discriminatory legal provisions, which previously impeded female military service.

While still a minority, Ukrainian women do play a prominent role in the peacebuilding process. The President of Ukraine has appointed a woman to a position in charge of the process of peaceful settlement in the Donbas region. There are also two women in Minsk working groups dealing with humanitarian and political issues. Building peace in my country requires women's participation and influence, including in the Minsk processes. It also requires action to stop the attacks against women and make sure that women will not be attacked with impunity. We will continue to work towards the development of a full range of judicial and non-judicial measures and institutional reform, in line with international standards.

As long as foreign aggression continues, peace and security will unfortunately remain a far-fetched and almost unattainable notion for the majority of women in the territory of Ukraine. Women will continue to lack protection, live in fear, have almost no recourse to justice, remain economically disadvantaged and live with limited freedom. The situation in Ukraine and the suffering as a result of Russian aggression show the importance of striking a balance between the two main pillars of the women and peace and security agenda: protection and participation. We believe that the Security Council must prioritize those two pillars.

The Russian aggression against Ukraine and its temporary occupation of part of Ukrainian territory has resulted in widespread human rights violations, including sexual and gender-based violence. According to the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, since the beginning of the aggression 32,252 conflict-related casualties have been recorded, including 2,505 civilians killed. A direct consequence of the Russian aggression against Ukraine has been the displacement of individuals and families, with 1.7 million internally displaced persons registered countrywide. Of those, older persons make up 78 per cent, women 58 per cent and children 8 per cent.

Regrettably, impunity for the human rights violations and abuses committed in the context of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, not least with regard to sexual violence, prevails. That is partly due to the fact that the conflict is ongoing and that a part of Ukraine's territory remains under the control of illegal armed groups, which are supported and managed by the Russian Federation. While there is still much to do, Ukraine has managed to make significant progress towards the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda.

I would like to finish my statement with a quote from the French philosopher and Nobel Prize winner Albert Camus: "Peace is the only battle worth waging". I am confident that it is our primary task to protect and secure our fragile world in its entirety. I thank you, Mr. President, for your able leadership of today's debate.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden.

Ms. Wallström (Sweden): I have come here directly from a visit to Herat and Kabul, in Afghanistan. I met with women and girls in the midst of conflict, who are struggling to make ends meet and keep their families safe. They face a constant risk of sexual violence. While talking to those women, I wondered what the women and peace and security agenda is doing for them.

Well, it should ensure that the women I met — for instance, those who work in the security sector — have more female colleagues and can work without the threat of harassment. It should ensure that the female mediators that Sweden has provided training for can have a real role and work free from the shadow of death threats. It should also have ensured that the girl I met — who is 18 years old, was married away at 13 and already has five children — could have perhaps had 10 more years to grow as a person, get an education and realize her dreams in life.

The oppression of women is a global disease. We see how women all over the world are systematically underrepresented in decision-making, receive fewer resources and lack fundamental rights in a number of areas. Sexual violence as a weapon of war is a horrendous manifestation of the oppression of women. I got to see that up close when, as some members of the Council might recall, I was appointed the first Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict some years ago. I often say that it was a role that left me with a heavier heart, but also with higher hope for the future, thanks to all the women I met who did not want to be seen as victims alone, but as actors, citizens and humans with full rights.

What I have come to realize was that we make three mistakes when we look at this issue. We tend to view it as inevitable, unspeakable and as a lesser crime. I had that job back in 2010 and 2011, when resolution 1325 (2000) celebrated its 10-year anniversary. Today, that resolution and seven more have existed for 17 years, and we are unfortunately still far from eradicating this horrendous practice. It saddens me, but it also strengthens my resolve.

In order to achieve real results for the women and peace and security agenda, we need to work systematically, as we have already heard. In that regard I thank all the briefers. We need to have a gender perspective to all aspects of peacebuilding. Therefore, let me point to three important aspects.

My first point, and this is also what everyone in this Chamber can help in, concerns data and analysis, because we can do much more about the situation on the ground if we have and use disaggregated data on women and men. As an example, that could concern statistics on education, internally displaced people or the number of women and men employed in the police force. Once we have the data, we need to look at it carefully before drawing conclusions. Reporting should have an integrated gender perspective that feeds into the Secretary-General's recommendations and conclusions. Women's civil society organizations — which are often at the front line — give valuable input. Sweden stands ready to work with the United Nations to enhance data collection and the analysis of gender-disaggregated data.

My second point concerns expertise. Many reports have highlighted how gender experts contribute to the overall success of United Nations missions. I am worried that budget cuts and mainstreamed mandates could result in cuts in essential gender expertise in United Nations missions. That would mean that we risk leaving out half of the population in our critical work on the protection of civilians or strengthening the rule of law. We must all do better to train and provide women to United Nations peace missions.

Thirdly, women's organizations and networks receive a disproportionately small amount of development funding. We have heard that already, thanks to Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka. That must change. Whether in the public, private or non-governmental organization spheres, there are networks of active women who are actors for peace and security. We should support women's organizations and networks and enable them to participate fully at the local, national and international levels.

When Sweden joined the Security Council, we set out two overarching priorities: conflict prevention, and women and peace and security. In all our work in the Council, we have sought to operationalize the agenda on women and peace and security. I am sure the Council has heard our excellent Ambassador, Olof Skoog, ask time after time where the women are, or whether we can put more language on women's participation into mandates, and so on. We do that, for instance, through ensuring the inclusion of gender reporting in mission mandates and adding criteria for listing sexual and gender-based violence in sanctions regimes. We will continue that work with commitment, not just on a day like this but on every other day as well.

It gives me hope that the new United Nations leadership places gender at the centre of its diplomacy for peace. It also gives me hope to read the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/861), which points out that meaningful participation by women has a demonstrable impact on the sustainability and effectiveness of peace processes, economic development and social prosperity. There is momentum for women's participation in peace processes. We should seize that momentum and place women's full enjoyment of their rights at the core of international peace and security. This is not a women's issue. It is an issue of peace and security, essential to a successful response to the many crises on the Council's agenda. The frameworks and tools are all in place. It is up to us to make it happen.

We know what is needed: political space, active civil-society organizations, constant capacity-building. And we have examples. For instance, in Afghanistan, where the restructured High Peace Council has 13 female and 39 male members, Sweden has supported local female leaders in building their capacity to participate in mediation and dialogue processes. In Somalia, the political will shown by the National Leadership Forum ensured a quota for women in Parliament, despite resistance to their participation. In Colombia, as we have heard, women's organizations paved the way for their inclusion in the peace process.

True change can be achieved only with strong and courageous political leadership. Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed set an example through the joint United Nations-African Union high-level mission to Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which focused on women and peace and security and development. We should build on that good example and use that methodology in future country visits. Gender equality makes societies more peaceful. Or, as I like to put it, more women, more peace. We, the Security Council, must show leadership, not only today but across the country-specific files and in all aspects of our work.

Let us remember Dag Hammarskjöld's words: "No peace which is not peace for all, no rest until all has been fulfilled."

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I would like to thank all our briefers and visiting Ministers for their remarks. I am particularly grateful that we have had the opportunity to hear a voice from civil society in this Chamber today, something that is even more vital at a time when so many such voices are being ignored, threatened or silenced around the world. That is great, and it is also great that so many people are attending the debate here today, but in the spirit of trying to improve still further how we do things here, I would like to make a few points frankly.

We meet in this format once a year and repeat what we already know — that we need more women at the negotiating table, that peace deals stand a greater chance of succeeding with women taking part, that we must turn our words into action. And yet, year after year, session after session, Secretary-General's report after report, the actual implementation of this agenda still falls way too short. We have had resolution after resolution — eight of them since resolution 1325 (2000) — and yet the promise of that first historic text still remains unfulfilled.

So I encourage everyone speaking later today to be specific about what his or her country has been doing since we last met in this format to make the women and peace and security agenda a reality — and then, ideally, to commit to doing even more. This year, the United Kingdom has worked to increase women's participation in conflict resolution in some of the most fragile countries in the world: Somalia, Syria, Yemen and Afghanistan. We have helped women in parliament, civil society, the military and business to increase their voice, influence and participation, and we will keep doing so next year.

But we also know that the agenda on women and peace and security is about more than work in individual countries. So many of the dangers that women face in conflict are shared ones that are found in every conflict, such as sexual violence and the stigmatization of survivors of such horrific crimes. And since they are shared challenges, we must all share in the response if we are to affect international change. That is why the United Kingdom has championed the prevention of sexual violence in conflict; why we launched the global principles on stigma in the General Assembly this year; why we are running 23 projects in conflict and post-conflict countries to support survivors, end stigma and deliver justice; and why we have contributed $2 million to the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund. I urge others to contribute, too.

Turning to peacekeeping, this year United Kingdom troops on large-scale overseas missions, whether for the United Nations or anyone else, are now receiving predeployment training on preventing sexual violence and on the women and peace and security agenda more broadly. Alongside our Bangladeshi and Canadian partners, we will be launching a new global network of military gender champions at the 2017 United Nations Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial Conference in Vancouver next month. We strongly support the Secretary-General's commitment to gender parity and his efforts to increase the number of women in peacekeeping. However, the women and peace and security agenda is about far more than numbers. We are concerned, frankly, about the fact that the Secretariat is deprioritizing gender advisers in United Nations missions, and we urge the United Nations to reinstate accountability through its compacts with United Nations leaders.

In the United Kingdom this year, Baroness Hale became the first woman ever to head our Supreme Court, which makes it the first time in our history that we have had women as our Head of State, Head of Government, and head of the most senior court in the land. This year we also appointed our first ever special envoy for gender equality, putting that issue at the heart of our foreign policy. But despite such historic steps, we have more to do. That is why next year we will be launching the United Kingdom's fourth national action plan, building on progress made, lessons learned and our discussions with civil society and focus countries.

My final point is that there is more that all of us around this table can do — both internally, in the missions and ministries that we lead, and externally, in the Security Council and around the United Nations. Internally, I commend to the Council the gender compact for the United Kingdom Mission that I launched this year. I encourage all to read it, steal its good ideas and apply them in their own missions. And outside our missions, we must practice every day what we preach in the Security Council. It is easy to talk about women and peace and security when that is the subject on our agenda, as it is today, but the challenge is to talk about it when our agenda is Syria or Somalia or South Sudan. We can all do better on that, and I encourage everyone to come together to do so.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia would like to thank the French presidency of the Council for convening today's open debate on the issue of women and peace and security. We also wish to thank the Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General, Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti; the Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka; the Secretary-General of the International Organization of La Francophonie, Ms. Michaëlle Jean; and the civil society representative from Colombia, Ms. Charo Mina-Rojas. For Bolivia, it is encouraging that the Chamber is full of civil society representatives.

We would also like to welcome the Ministers here with us in this meeting, in particular the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, and to tell her that the words of Ambassador Olof Skoog resonate beyond this Chamber. During the Council's recent to visit to the Sahel region, we heard inspiring words from women leaders, who reminded us that part of their platform and one of their tools in their fight are the resolutions that the Council adopts, with the language we debate within these walls.

Eighteen years have passed since the Security Council adopted resolution 1325 (2000), which underscores the fundamental link between respect for gender equality and international peace and security. Since then, the United Nations has undertaken significant efforts and has made great strides in the implementation of the Council's resolutions with a view to effectively incorporating the gender perspective and ensuring the participation of women in peace processes. However, in spite of those efforts, the implementation of the agenda on women and peace and security continues to pose challenges that require political will and leadership from States, in addition to the active participation of regional organizations and the cooperation of the international community as a whole.

First, it is important to have information on the situation of women and girls in all conflict zones. While there are generalities, each country has its own reality and different challenges to tackle. That is why we must have data disaggregated by gender and other relevant criteria that allow us to systematize information and improve upon our assessments of strengths and weaknesses. That would make a better approach possible, so that the mandates of United Nations missions could address the needs of women and girls. In that regard, we welcome the initiative of Norway, Colombia and Namibia to develop an index on women and peace and security.

In that vein, taking stock of the implementation of the agenda in each country will make it possible to see in which areas we need to strengthen the participation of women. We must build capacities for monitoring and assessment in order to ensure the implementation of the agenda, with the guidance of the United Nations and other specialized organizations, at the request of the parties.

As we stated a few months ago in this Chamber, we must secure a meaningful role for women in the processes of prevention, negotiation, mediation and resolution of conflicts and peacebuilding. The creation of societies that promote gender equality not only bolsters economic development, but also ensures that peace processes are inclusive and sustainable. To that end, we believe that encouraging the political and economic empowerment of women is key, in addition to ensuring access to justice and education. Moreover, we cannot deny that the fight against impunity through accountability for crimes of sexual violence contributes to the healing processes necessary for sustainable peace.

Like our colleague from the United Kingdom, I will try to address a few specific issues, related to Bolivia's experience. Since the promulgation of the new political State Constitution in 2009, Bolivia has developed and implemented legislation for building an equitable society with equal opportunities for women, while placing emphasis on their political empowerment. The electoral system law established parity and alternation on the candidate lists for representative seats, which makes Bolivia the second country in the world with greater representation of women in parliament. In Bolivia more than 50 per cent of elected positions are held by women, not just in Parliament but in other elected bodies. Furthermore, in the economic sphere, the community-renewal agrarian reform law not only ensures the participation of women in the healing processes and distribution of land; it prioritizes the right of women to own land, thereby promoting their economic empowerment.

Those topics are closely related to inequality. Ten years ago, when we spoke of women, especially of indigenous women, we were speaking of poverty. That issue is linked to inequality, not just within countries but around the world. I believe it is worthwhile to recall that eight men have the same wealth as 360 million people, and that is one of the causes of conflict. In my country, 10 years ago 38 per cent of the population was living in abject poverty. Ten years later, that 38 per cent has been reduced to 16 per cent. What is the key to that success? It is, without a doubt, the recovery of strategic resources and the State's fulfilment of its role in wealth redistribution.

The United Nations must maintain a close relationship with regional organizations to implement this agenda. For example, working with the African Union has been very important in being able to implement the programme on women and peace and security in the African continent and to strengthen existing mechanisms. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063 place gender equality and women's empowerment among their primary goals.

An example that we would like to highlight is the political leadership that Nigeria showed by establishing a national plan of action on women and peace and security in its fight against the terrorist group Boko Haram. We emphasize that that initiative has encouraged countries in the region to develop similar measures.

Lastly, we commend the work of the United Nations and leadership of the Secretary-General. The Organization has a sizeable system directed at the global objectives of gender equality and implementation of the agenda on women and peace and security. It is essential that all of its agencies and offices dedicated to this issue work in a coordinated fashion.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): The Senegalese delegation welcomes the convening of this open debate on the topic of women and peace and security, 17 years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), which marked the first milestone of truly taking into account the issue of women in peace efforts. It is a topic that the Security Council has elevated to the front ranks of priority so as to better fulfil its primary mission of conflict prevention and resolution, in accordance with Charter of the United Nations.

The acuteness and multidimensional scope of the issue are clear in the statements that we have just heard. On that note, I would like to thank the briefers: Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General; Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN-Women; Ms. Michaëlle Jean, Secretary General of the International Organization of La Francophonie; and Ms. Charo Mina-Rojas, civil society representative.

This is a good opportunity for my delegation to reiterate that Senegal, like the other African countries and organizations, remains firmly convinced that, for the maintenance of international peace and security to be effective and lasting, we cannot overlook the role and invaluable contribution of women, who are the main victims of all kinds of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence. The simple, mathematical reality should compel us to ensure that the majority of the world's population, comprised of women, is more included and empowered so as to stabilize the world and bring about lasting prosperity.

From the fourthWorld Conference on Women in Beijing to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, there is unanimous agreement that countries and human communities are more peaceful and prosperous when women enjoy the same rights and opportunities as men. Persistent insecurity and inequality in the social, political, economic and even environmental spheres negatively affect women, and thus hinder gender equality and women's empowerment. Women's specific experiences and lives in times of conflict and in times of peace, nor their skills, are still not sufficiently taken into account in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, reconciliation, reconstruction and peacebuilding.

I hope that today's debate will contribute to other stages in the effective integration of women's rights and gender equality in public policy and in the minds of all individuals of every social status and every cultural affiliation. It is in that respect that I welcome the 2017 report of the Secretary General (S/2017/861), whose recommendations call for greater commitment, particularly in the five key areas — women's effective participation in peace efforts, the protection of women's fundamental rights during and after conflicts, planning with accountability for results, strengthening gender architecture, and the funding of priority programmes based on the women and peace and security agenda.

Nevertheless, the balance sheet is still mixed, despite the considerable progress made here and there, as there are still significant challenges in many areas, including participation in mediation and the deployment of women in Blue Helmets.

Fortunately, the establishment of structures such as the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, the Women and Peace and Security National Focal Points Network, the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund in order to bolster active regional and national mechanisms, lends renewed hope to the idea that the international community could achieve gender equality in its efforts to build lasting peace in the world.

Africa is the impetus behind resolution 1325 (2000), which was a resolution of Namibia. The continent is prey to several conflicts, but it participates in the implementation of this agenda through several operational mechanisms and legal instruments conducive to policies that could lead to the effective contribution of women in the maintenance of peace and security. Those include the Maputo Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa; the 2004 Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa; the African Decade for Women, initiated by the Women, Gender and Development Directorate of the African Union; and the appointment by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission of a Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security — all of which led to the creation of the African Women Leaders Network. I take this opportunity to reiterate the full support of the Government of Senegal and to pay tribute to those brave women who, through their actions, are contributing significantly to the development of public policies, including those related to the quest for peace.

At the subregional level, Senegal, alongside the other member countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), has adopted the Dakar Declaration on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). It has thereby committed decisively to strengthening the role of women, especially in mediation, the promotion of a culture of peace and the facilitation of early warning systems. As a result, a number of initiatives have been taken, such as the establishment of a gender unit within the executive secretariat of ECOWAS, the establishment of a gender development centre, the adoption of a strategic gender plan and the drafting of a gender policy.

At the national level, Senegal has integrated all international, regional and subregional instruments into its legal arsenal and internal institutional architecture, in that ensuring the right conditions for the full implementation of the international commitments it has undertaken regarding the rights of women and girls. In that spirit, the Government of Senegal has adopted and implemented a sectoral gender strategy, including the institutionalization of gender in Senegalese defence and security force interventions. As a result, 113 Senegalese women are currently deployed in peacekeeping missions. Senegal's resolute commitment is a natural extension of its gender policy, which has already led to the adoption of a law on full gender parity in all elected and partially elected posts at both the national and local levels.

Like the Government, Senegalese civil society organizations remain very active in advocating for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) by building the capacities of women and girls in the field of peace and security.

As successful and proactive as those strategies, policies and measures of integration and empowerment of women have been, many challenges still remain. Therefore, we must strengthen cooperation among States if we are to effectively implement national action plans developed to ensure the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). In that connection, I would like to draw attention to the specifics of the Sahelo-Saharan region, where we see alarming trends in violent extremism and terrorism and transnational organized crime, along with concomitant trafficking — the primary victims of which are women and children.

We must promote synergistic action among the Security Council and other United Nations bodies, including the various entities on the ground. For example, the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, created by Council resolution 2242 (2015), and the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Security Council on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa would benefit from improved coordination in order to identify and share lessons learned and best practices in the integration of the women and peace and security agenda into conflict prevention policies.

I would like to conclude by endorsing the statement of Secretary-General António Guterres regarding the participation of women in peace processes,

> "[a]t this time, the setting up of inclusive processes, with effective participation of women,should be the rule, no longer the exception."

What better way to help women and girls around the world — by restoring the dignity that has been stripped from them.

Mr. Lambertini (Italy): At the outset, I wish to thank the French presidency for having organized this important debate. I would also like to extend heartfelt thanks to all of our briefers for their important, exhaustive and passionate contributions.

Since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), the women and peace and security agenda has become an essential pillar and a necessary tool in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peacebuilding and humanitarian action. The statements delivered today clearly attest to the fact that the women and peace and security discourse — namely, the announcement of women's participation in leadership in peace and security processes — is also proving to be an important entry point for fostering dialogue with countries in conflict and post-conflict situations.

The 2015 global study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) recognized that the meaningful participation of women is crucial to the operational effectiveness, success and sustainability of peace and security processes. The evidence of that is increasingly solid and undeniable, as shown by the Secretary-General in his latest report on women and peace and security (S/2017/861). Nonetheless, the perspective and voices of women, including at the grassroots level, often go unheard, since they are still rarely included in peace negotiations. The exclusion of women from those processes directly and negatively impacts the sustainability of peace agreements, as well as the quality of democracy, the development of inclusive societies and respect for human rights.

And still, in many countries around the world, women continue to be sexually exploited, trafficked, subjected to female genital mutilation and forced marriages. We warmly welcome the gender parity strategy recently launched by the Secretary-General, as we believe that the United Nations has to lead by example and be a standard-setting Organization. Unfortunately, according to some studies, at the current rate, it will take around 170 years to achieve gender parity worldwide. This is why we welcome your call, Mr. President, to Member States at this year's open debate to present concrete actions and share best practices aimed at closing implementation gaps and accelerating progress. We encourage the adoption of this as a common practice at future open debates.

In our view, the implementation of the whole women and peace and security agenda is closely linked to the strengthening of women's meaningful participation in the life of their communities, in particular throughout the peace process cycle. Let me provide some concrete examples.

First, in line with the Secretary-General's commitment to women's leadership and gender equality as a vital element of his prevention agenda, I am very proud to announce that the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network was launched yesterday in Rome. The aim of the Network is twofold: prevention and mediation, on the one hand, and capacity-building on the other.

In the Mediterranean region issues of migration combine with human trafficking, transnational organized crime, increasing violent extremism, refugees and humanitarian emergencies. In such a context, women can help countries prevent conflicts and strengthen national reconciliation processes by ensuring a gendered and inclusive perspective on issues of security, justice and governance, which are often the root causes of violent conflicts. The Network is also a concrete way for women to acquire and develop further capacity and expertise to successfully contribute to mediation efforts as official United Nations mediators or mediation experts.

The launch was possible thanks to the fact that, for the first time, our national action plan on women, peace and security was granted a financial contribution enhanced by the Italian Parliament. We encourage all Member States to properly finance their national action plans, since the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda demands change, and no real change is possible without the necessary financial resources.

Secondly, Italy believes that women's empowerment, gender equality and the protection of women's rights are intrinsic to sustainable development and conflict prevention. Therefore, to step up efforts in the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, in 2017 my country has committed approximately $10 million to supporting a number of projects led by UN-Women in Africa, the Middle East and Central America in the areas of both women's empowerment and engagement in peace and security processes. That reflects our belief that the efforts to implement the women and peace and security agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are mutually reinforcing.

Thirdly, and finally, we encourage the United Nations to use in a more consistent way the women and peace and security discourse with countries in conflict and post-conflict situations. In that regard, we welcome the joint high-level mission conducted by the United Nations with the African Union last July in Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which had a strong women and peace and security angle focused on women's meaningful participation in peace, security and development. We encourage the United Nations to continue along this path and to organize similar missions in other countries by working in synergy with regional and subregional organizations and initiatives, such as women mediators' networks.

I want to stress that when we talk about women's participation it is not only a question of numbers, it is a question of ensuring their meaningful participation in conflict prevention, mediation and preventive diplomacy processes. The meaningful participation of women is indisputably an accelerator for peace that will lead to higher peace dividends in dispute settlements. And if we really do care about peace, making full use of their potential is a smart thing to do.

Allow me to conclude by recalling three pivotal moments that we experienced this year in the Security Council. One was the Arria Formula meeting we organized two weeks ago, co-hosted with France, Sweden and Uruguay, on school attacks. We also recall the incredible participation of Joy Bishara in that event and the message of pride and bravery that she conveyed to all of us. I also want to recall the Council's two missions in Africa, one in the Lake Chad basin and the other, as was remembered by the Ambassador of Bolivia, some weeks ago in the Sahel region. The meeting that we had with the female members of parliament and representatives of civil society and in the refugee camps was by far the most important meeting that we had in that mission.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I thank the Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General for having briefed us on the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda (S/2017/861). I also thank the Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka; Secretary-General of the International Organization of La Francophonie, Ms. Michaëlle Jean; and our terrific civil society briefer from Colombia, Ms. Charo Mina-Rojas, for their important perspectives.

Bhimrao Ambedkar, the esteemed Indian jurist and social activis,t once said,

> "I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved."

So as we engage in this debate today, I think we should keep Mr. Ambedkar's simple but important idea in mind.

The role of women in maintaining international peace and security is more critical than ever, but we must continue to move from rhetoric to reality when it comes to fully implementing the women and peace and security agenda. Today's debate should remind us all of the collective work that is still required to see more women gain positions of leadership in Government and civil society and seats at the negotiating table. As the Secretary-General's report makes clear, we have so much more to do to achieve inclusivity.

For our part, the United States remains committed to advancing the full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). Earlier this month the United States took a major legislative step to advance the women and peace and security agenda. On 6 October, the United States Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017 was signed into law. That reflects a growing body of evidence confirming that the inclusion of women in peace processes helps reduce conflict and advance stability over the long term. That Act, for example, requires my Government to develop a comprehensive strategy to expand women's participation in security operations. It also reflects the now indisputable fact that when women are involved in efforts to bring about peace and security, the results are more sustainable.

We are taking other important steps to advance this agenda, particularly through women's economic empowerment. We know that women's full participation in the economy not only leads to national growth and prosperity, it also bolsters stability for all. That is why the United States has helped spearhead the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative, which already has $340 million in donor commitments and will support women entrepreneurs in developing countries by increasing their access to finance, markets, technology and networks — everything they need to start and grow a business.

I would like to turn now to the Secretary-General's report. First, we were disheartened to learn that the number of women participating in United Nations co-led peace processes has decreased. Research shows that the participation in a peace negotiation by women in civil society groups makes the resulting agreement 64 per cent less likely to fail and 35 per cent more likely to endure at least 15 years. We welcome the Secretary-General's commitment to addressing this, but I must underscore that we all need to do more to improve women's meaningful participation in peace processes. In that connection, we welcome the development of the High-level Advisory Board on Mediation, and we hope it will find effective ways to achieve equal representation of women in mediation.

We cannot talk about the involvement of women in peace processes without applauding one recent example: Colombia. In large part because of the inclusion of women in Colombia's peace negotiations — women like Ms. Mina-Rojas — Colombia's peace agreement includes more than 100 gender-specific provisions. Therefore, when women effectively influence a peace process, it is more likely that an agreement will be reached, implemented and sustained, and we are confident that Colombia will continue to be an important example of that.

Secondly, we welcome the Secretary-General's commitment to improving impact evaluation of gender-inclusion efforts. Whether on corporate boards, in Government or in post-conflict zones, we know that gender parity makes teams more effective and makes women more empowered. We look forward to results being included in next year's annual report.

Thirdly, we welcome increased attention on the nexus between violent extremism and women and peace and security. In our view, women continue to be an underutilized and undertapped resource in the fight against violent extremism. Women are of course local peacebuilders and grass-roots civil society activists. They are in touch with their communities and should therefore be seen also as a first line of defence in detecting radicalization in their communities. My country is dedicating increased focus and resources to understanding the variety of roles that women play in this space, including how women can play more vital roles in preventing terrorist ideologies from taking root.

We are grateful that there are women defying terrorist ideologies across the globe, often putting their own lives at risk in doing so. For example, when the Taliban attacked Kunduz in 2015 and again in 2016, each time they tried to kill Ms. Sediqa Sherzai, a brave journalist who runs Radio Roshani in Afghanistan. Ms. Sherzai leads discussion programmes and call-in shows, and she urges women to assert their rights to an education and to lead as vital voices in their communities. Courageous women activists like Ms. Sherzai are making a difference, and thanks to the women and peace and security agenda at the United Nations, we are hopeful that those gains will continue.

The United States remains fully committed to the robust implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. We welcome the Secretary-General's strong commitment to this issue, and we look forward to continuing to partner with the United Nations and other Member State to advance those goals.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN-Women, for her valuable briefing, and I also thank the other briefers.

Over the past two decades, the experience of the Security Council has demonstrated that women's participation in peacemaking and peacebuilding maximizes the benefits of achieving and sustaining peace, as well as preventing relapses into conflict. The recommendations of the 2015 *Global Study on the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325* are of the utmost importance. However, they remain a dead letter and have not been implemented. In the context of the follow-up of implementing the recommendations of the global study, we would like to stress the following points.

First, Egypt values and supports the new United Nations system-wide strategy for gender parity. We believe that the strategy is an integral part of the reform of the Organization. We stress the importance of ensuring women's effective participation and leadership, reinforcing gender-based knowledge and providing the required funding for promoting gender equality and the women and peace and security agenda.

Second, we support visits by United Nations officials, focusing solely on women and peace and security, to conflict and post-conflict areas, such as the visit headed by Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed to Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Ms Mohammed briefed the Council on the visit during Egypt's presidency last August (see S/PV.8022). In that regard, we stress that the scope of the women and peace and security agenda should be limited to countries in conflict and post-conflict situations.

Third, we take note of the Secretary General's intention to focus his report (S/2017/861) on the participation of women in peace operations. Egypt calls for going beyond merely evaluating the level of participation to developing concrete recommendations aimed at ensuring a more effective participation of women. In that connection, Egypt seeks to increase the number of female peacekeepers as it deploys more Blue Helmets to peacekeeping missions.

Fourth, it is not enough to only adopt action plans on women and peace and security, as such plans and their commitments need to be adequately funded. Egypt therefore believes that it is critical to assist States by building their capacity in that area.

Fifth, we are concerned that there has been a setback in the meaningful participation of women, as detailed in the Secretary-General's report, despite the existing legal and institutional framework to enable such participation.

Sixth, the suffering of women and girls is exacerbated by terrorism in conflict areas. Furthermore, women continue to suffer under occupation.

Seventh, we advocate the need to strictly adhere to the delivery of the women and peace and security mandate. Any deviation from the mandate to other topics would undermine the agenda's purpose and implementation. We must strike a balance between the two key pillars of the women and peace and security agenda, namely, protection and participation.

We must consider the specific cultural and social character of every country when implementing the agenda so as to increase the participation of women in conflict and post-conflict areas. There must be co-payment mechanisms in place involving donors and implementing entities so as to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of the agenda. All of that must be carried out while at the same time stressing national ownership and joint implementation with national authorities.

Egypt spares no effort to assist in the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. With regard to combating sexual exploitation and abuse, in response to the Secretary General's zero-tolerance policy, we have introduced an intensive and comprehensive training module on awareness related to sexual exploitation and abuse into the predeployment training of our peacekeeping troops. Furthermore, the Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding has published a manual entitled "Prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping operations", to be used by Egyptian peacekeeping troops. The manual is available to all troop-contributing countries, and it has been translated into English and French.

With regard to training programmes, the Cairo Center and Egypt's National Council for Women, in partnership with the Crisis Management Center Finland, organize basic training courses on the role of women in peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Participants have included members of the military and the police, as well as civilians from numerous Arab and African States. In the near future, the Center will collaborate with its counterparts in other countries. Moreover, the Center has developed a first-of-its-kind training manual in the Arab region on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) as it relates to peacekeeping and peacebuilding in the Arab world.

We call for renewed political and ethical commitment to empowering women in post-conflict areas and countries. Women are a main pillar in the process of the transformation from conflict to development, and from conflict-torn societies to sound ones, capable of achieving sustained peace.

Ms. Guadey (Ethiopia) (*spoke in French*): We thank the French presidency for organizing today's open debate. We also thank the briefers for sharing their thoughts and perspectives on the question of women and peace and security.

(*spoke in English*)

Ethiopia welcomes the positive developments that have taken place over the years in advancing the women and peace and security agenda since the adoption of the Security Council's groundbreaking resolution 1325 (2000), particularly in ensuring the participation and representation of women in political processes. We also welcome the initiatives and measures taken by the Secretary-General and the broader United Nations system aimed at advancing the women and peace and security agenda through a renewed commitment to gender equality and women's representation and improving gender mainstreaming in United Nations planning, programming, resource mobilization and rapid deployment. We also welcome the work of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and her team of experts for their efforts to strengthen national capacities to address sexual violence.

We note with serious concern the challenges identified in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/861) in relation to the issues of gender inequality, of ensuring women's participatio, and of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence, as well as the unprecedented increase in the number of women who participate in violent extremist and terrorist groups, including as foreign terrorist fighters. We also recognize that much more needs to be done to address sexual exploitation and abuse, based on substantiated evidence. Taking into account both the progress that has been made and the continuing challenges regarding the women and peace and security agenda, we would like to highlight a few points that focus on the best way to integrate an original approach into the broader women and peace and security discussion, based on our experience in Africa.

In the past few years Africa has registered significant progress in advancing the women and peace and security agenda, both at the continental and subregional levels. As indicated in the Secretary-General's report, a number of African countries have adopted national action plans based on resolution 1325 (2000) and other subsequent resolutions on women and peace and security. The African Union, along with subregional organizations such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, has also adopted gender policies. In our view, those policies, coupled with other legal instruments, could provide a very good basis for coordination between the United Nations and the African Union in facilitating greater implementation and enhancing the advancement of the women and peace and security agenda in Africa.

Among other things, such coordination could focus on ensuring the active participation of women and women's groups in peace processes, conflict prevention and resolution and peacebuilding activities, as well as on promoting and protecting the human rights of women in conflict and post-conflict situations. One way of enhancing such cooperation could be through missions such as the recent joint United Nations-African Union high-level solidarity mission to Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, led by the Deputy Secretary-General in July. Mechanisms to utilize the good offices of the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Women, Peace and Security could also be explored with the aim of advancing the women and peace and security agenda at the continental level.

We believe it is also important to further strengthen support in the African Union or at subregional levels for initiatives and frameworks such as those aimed at ensuring women's participation and leadership as observers or in advisory roles in peace processes, in mediation and election observer missions or in countering violent extremism. It is in that context that, while we welcome the focus of the next annual report of the Secretary-General on the quality of participation and representation of women in peace processes, we encourage the Secretary-General to include in the report regional approaches adopted by the United Nations to advance the women and peace and security agenda, with a particular focus on cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union.

I would like to conclude by emphasizing the importance of addressing systemic challenges to women's access to political and economic spaces in order to ensure prosperous and peaceful societies. That will require a renewed commitment to building partnerships with various stakeholders, particularly regional and subregional organizations, the States concerned, development agencies, civil-society organizations, women experts and groups and peace and security partners within the women and peace and security agenda. I would therefore like to affirm Ethiopia's commitment to working towards this objective.

Mr. Zagaynov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would first like to thank the French presidency for organizing today's meeting. We are grateful to the briefers for their statements and helpful information.

In the time that has passed since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) considerable success has been achieved in enhancing the role of women in preventing and resolving armed conflicts as well as in post-conflict rebuilding. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about another, no less important, task, which is ensuring the appropriate protection of women in the course of conflicts. In spite of the many efforts that have been made, women continue to fall victim to various forms of violence, losing their lives or their health during conflicts. We have been shocked by the barbaric acts and atrocities that terrorist groups have committed against women. As we consider the subject of the women and peace and security agenda, we therefore believe it is particularly important to focus specifically on issues directly related to the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security.

With regard to other associated topics — such as ensuring gender equality, expanding rights and opportunities for women and upholding women's human rights — there are specialized organizations and mechanisms in place for dealing with them. As we see it, the way that the topic of women and peace and security is discussed is increasingly straying from its basic framework. We are seeing a similar trend in the approaches used in preparing the thematic report of the Secretary-General. We also want to note once again that it is inappropriate to use the platform of the Security Council to promote controversial concepts and approaches that do not have broad international support.

We firmly believe that there is significant potential for women's participation in various aspects of resolving armed conflicts and post-conflict reconstruction, and that the direct participation of women in preventing armed conflicts and in post-conflict reconstruction is a major requisite for eliminating violence against them. Women have a special role to play in United Nations peacekeeping. As far as Russia's contribution in that area is concerned, we have ensured a 15 per cent female presence in our peacekeeping efforts. We also train women police officers in United Nations certified training centres, and we also plan to do the same for women soldiers by the end of the year.

The Security Council's regular debates on women and peace and security enable us to take stock of the progress made in improving the protection of women in conditions of armed conflict and ensuring their full and effective participation in efforts to prevent and resolve crises. We believe it is important to ensure that our efforts to develop comprehensive approaches in this area do not lead us to ignore the specifics of particular conflict situations, or to the inclusion of gender aspects in the work of the United Nations becoming an end in itself. We should also take this kind of differentiated approach to the mandates given to United Nations departments and structures regarding the incorporation of gender issues into their activities. They have their own clear remits, and for most of them issues related women and peace and security are not a defining priority but just one of a number of factors within the framework of their activities related to preventing and settling armed conflicts and dealing with post-conflict situations. Let us also not forget that the primary responsibility for protecting women at every stage of an armed conflict rests with Governments and that measures undertaken by United Nations entities and civil society should be aimed at supporting and complementing the efforts of States.

I want to say a few words in connection with the statement made by the delegation of Ukraine. There was no mention in that statement today of Ms. Savchenko. Perhaps not everyone here recalls how for several years, at every Security Council meeting on women's issues, the Ukrainian delegation would sound the alarm about the fate of Nadiya Savchenko, who was presented as a national heroine. It may be that not everyone knows that after her return to Ukraine, Ms. Savchenko soon became an extremely vocal critic of the policies of the Kyiv regime, after which the Ukrainian authorities' attitude to her cooled markedly and she fell into disgrace, partly because she urged for launching negotiations in Donetsk and Luhansk with the aim of restoring peace and tried to promote that. That clearly exemplifies the Ukrainian authorities' approach to the issue of women's participation in resolving conflicts.

That is a clear illustration of the point of the Ukrainian delegation's anti-Russian statements. Today we were told once again about how women have suffered as a result of the conflict in south-eastern Ukraine. That is unfortunately true. And the people responsible for it are the Kyiv authorities, who in 2014 launched military action against their own people. Besides that, the conflict has been accompanied by terrible crimes committed by the Ukrainian armed forces against women. Anyone interested can find the relevant information in the reports of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, for example. The residents of the Donbas region, including the elderly, have suffered greatly from Kyiv's unmerciful economic and financial blockade. In contrast, Russia has been consistently providing the region with humanitarian assistance. We have instituted an open-door policy for Ukrainian refugees, 51 per cent of whom are women and girls. Anyone who ends up on Russian territory after suffering in the armed conflict in Ukraine is offered essential social assistance and access to education and health care, and women and children get special attention because of their particular vulnerability.

In conclusion, we would like to say that our country has a unique history with regard to equality between men and women. Decisions on that topic were taken as long ago as the early years of the twentieth century. Today women's participation in preventing and resolving conflicts and ensuring sustainable peace is becoming ever more important. That item is also high on the Security Council's agenda, and deservedly so. We intend to continue contributing to discussions on various United Nations platforms on ways to ensure meaningful improvements in the protection of women and their rights and ensuring their effective participation in peace processes.

Mr. Shen Bo (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China is grateful for the briefings by Ms. Ribeiro Viotti, Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General; Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN-Women; and Ms. Jean, Secretary-General of the International Organization of La Francophonie. We also listened attentively to the statement by the representative of civil society.

Women are an important force behind human progress, and their cause and that of human development are closely linked. Since the Council's adoption of the first-ever resolution on women and peace and security, resolution 1325 (2000), the international community has built a strong framework for fostering a greater role for women in peace and security and has achieved important results and positive progress.

At the same time, we must recognize the increasing challenges and complexities of the international security landscape, in which we see regional conflicts come and go like a game of whack-a-mole. More often than not, women bear the brunt of those conflicts and suffer the most. Much remains to be done by the international community to protect the rights of women in situations of conflict. Further effort needs to be made by the international community.

First, we must intensify our efforts to prevent and suppress armed conflicts. China supports the efforts of the Security Council, within the limits of its mandate under the Charter of the United Nations, to actively encourage Member States at the political level to settle their disputes through dialogue and consultation, and to continue to play a greater role in preventing conflict and maintaining peace, thereby providing a solid foundation for the protection of women. The international community should embrace the concepts of peaceful development and win-win cooperation, heed the voices and aspirations of women at all stages of the peace process and ensure women's effective participation in those processes so as to take advantage of their unique role.

Secondly, we must resolutely combat violations of women's rights in conflict and work diligently to protect women's legitimate rights and interests. The international community should prioritize leadership on the part of host countries, assist them in the full implementation of the relevant Council resolutions, pay special attention to the needs of vulnerable groups, such as women, and focus on ending sexual violence in armed conflict. The international community should respond to the threat of terrorism appropriately, work constructively to explore effective ways to promote international cooperation on counter-terrorism and take comprehensive measures to protect women from terrorist and extremist forces.

Thirdly, we must sharpen the focus on protecting women's rights and interests during post-conflict reconstruction. The international community, with an eye to a broader horizon and a longer view, should provide development assistance and technical support to efforts to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment in developing countries, with the goal of eliminating the root causes of conflict and fundamentally safeguarding women's rights and interests. We should actively help the countries concerned, promote economic and social development and ensure that the dividends of development benefit the entire population, including women, while women's groups and civil society should be guided to enable them to play a catalytic role to that end.

Last but not least, we must ensure that United Nations agencies exploit their respective expertise and strength and work together with all parties in synergy. The Council has adopted a series of resolutions on women and peace and security that embody consensus and should therefore be effectively implemented. The relevant United Nations bodies, including the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and UN-Women, should improve their coordination of their respective mandates and cooperate fully with regional and subregional organizations in areas such as the exchange of experience, training, in-country capacity-building and financing, so that existing mechanisms can be fully utilized, their potential exploited and their effectiveness enhanced.

China stands ready to work with the rest of the international community to continue pursuing the goals of women and peace and security and to make greater efforts to promote greater development of the global women's cause.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): I would first like to thank the presidency of France for convening today's meeting on a very important topic. I am also grateful to all the briefers for their very insightful and powerful statements.

Despite the fact that 17 years have passed since the Security Council's adoption of its landmark resolution 1325 (2000), the normative framework has still not been fully put in place. Exactly two years ago, in October 2015, some 100 countries announced their commitment to promoting the women and peace and security agenda. We were one of them, of course. At the time, Japan made a number of commitments that included, first, our determination to steadily implement our national action plan and ensure its effective monitoring. The second was increasing our financial support to UN-Women and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. The third was investing in developing human resources and the education of displaced women. We like to think that Japan has faithfully fulfilled those promises.

This year we completed the first evaluation report on our national action plan, and are steadily implementing its commitments. Our cooperation with UN-Women is growing. In 2016, Japan became its second-largest contributor, with those contributions largely directed at efforts to support human-resource development and education for displaced women in the Middle East and Africa. We also continue to be one of the top donors to the team of experts of the Office of Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and we affirm our ongoing support for their work.

According to the World Bank, as many as 90 per cent of conflicts between 2000 to 2009 were relapses. Women's meaningful participation and leadership are key to preventing conflict, sustaining peace and avoiding relapses into conflict. Today I will focus on the areas of peace negotiations and peacekeeping missions, in which Japan has been actively involved and has some expertise. While the reality represented by the reported figures is a stark one for both areas, we strongly believe in their potential to drive the women and peace and security agenda significantly forward.

Past experience has shown that women's effective participation and influence in the peace negotiation process are closely linked to the eventual achievement of sustained peace. In that regard, I commend the efforts of the regional networks of women mediators in the African, Nordic and Mediterranean regions, a subject that the representative of Italy already touched on. Japan is ready to work to apply this positive trend to other regions, including Asia. Training is central to our efforts. For example, Japan supported UN-Women's technical training on peacebuilding, mediation and conflict prevention for 230 women through the Peace Support Training Centre in Kenya in 2016, which significantly changed the mindset of the whole community, including its male leaders, and promoted women's participation in traditionally male-dominated local peacebuilding committees. It genuinely helped to mitigate tensions between communities.

Making a peacekeeping mission as gender-responsive as possible is directly linked to its success. It is key to the consolidation of peace on the ground. The United Nations system-wide strategy on gender parity is an excellent guide and, needless to say, we must ensure its full implementation. Pooling and training mission staff are crucial. We were pleased to join the collective effort to support the Department of Field Support's senior women talent pipeline project. In that connection, we will hold an outreach seminar for the project in Tokyo this very weekend, inviting potential senior women candidates. Improving the gender-responsiveness of peacekeeping missions will contribute significantly to eliminating sexual exploitation and abuses by peacekeeping personnel.

Finally, in the wake of UN-Women's HeForShe Champion movement, we should note the importance of mobilizing men's active engagement in efforts to establish gender parity and the equality and empowerment of women, which of course includes the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. Japan will continue to work with members of the Council and the United Nations to promote that agenda further.

Mr. Tumysh (Kazakhstan): I thank the French presidency for putting the spotlight on the women and peace and security agenda, and the Secretary-General for his astute recommendations. We would like to express our warm appreciation to Executive Director Mlambo-Ngcuka and her team for their leadership and groundbreaking work on the issue. We also thank Ms. Ribeiro Viotti, Ms. Jean, and Ms. Mina-Rojas, the representative of civil society, for their insightful briefings.

The women and peace and security agenda, as first outlined in resolution 1325 (2000), should be increasingly used as an important tool for conflict prevention and resolution, as well as a source of transformational change across all three pillars of the United Nations. Providing support to newly created United Nations mechanisms — such as the Council's new Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security; the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund; the Women, Peace and Security National Focal Points Network and the Peacebuilding Commission's gender strategy — will further accelerate the implementation of this agenda. Council resolutions and presidential statements should make increasing use of the language of the women and peace and security agenda in order to bring a new paradigm into the thinking of the Council, the United Nations system, Member States and police- and troop-contributing countries. Kazakhstan is committed to continuing the excellent practice of inviting representatives from women's organizations to brief the Council. We must still persist with efforts to bridge the gap between spoken commitments and actual action, especially when the participation of women is still lacking, in times of peace as well as conflict.

A more proactive role for women in preventing and resolving conflicts is a priority for Kazakhstan. We should diligently support the Secretary-General's reforms focused on keeping gender at the centre of prevention efforts and a firm commitment to gender parity at the highest levels across the United Nations, as well as supporting his work to reform the Organization's peace and security architecture. That requires improving the collaboration between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and UN-Women, both in the field and at Headquarters, as well as on the new United Nations initiatives aimed at doubling the number of women in military and police contingents by 2020. All peacekeeping operations should have strong mandates on women and peace and security, with gender specialists in the areas of the rule of law; human rights; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; internally displaced people; refugee returnees; rehabilitation; livelihood services and trauma counselling. We need stronger and more systematic gender mainstreaming to help prevent violent extremism and asymmetric conflict situations.

Funding for areas related to the women and peace and security agenda, especially in protracted conflicts, remains a concern. We must provide the necessary funds to ensure that missions have sufficient expertise, authority and capacity. Part of that funding gap can be overcome by expanding reforms and improving the streamlining and coordination of strategies through the United Nations system and its collaboration with other partners. Global processes are much more effective when they are firmly established on the ground and when each Member State and region plays its role.

In support of multilateral efforts, Kazakhstan has begun the process of integrating all four pillars of the women and peace and security agenda into its national legislation, including formulating new, strong prowomen policies. Commitments on women and peace and security have been included in the Republic of Kazakhstan's family and gender policy for the period from 2016 to 2030, with the goal of ensuring women's engagement in policy- and decision-making in all spheres of national governance and gender-equality training for the armed and security forces, as well as women's deployment in peacekeeping operations.

Zero tolerance for gender-based violence is a definitive part of our national policy, inspired by resolution 1325 (2000). Throughout the world, the perpetrators of such violence must be brought to justice, and that justice must be transformative. Sustainable Development Goal 5 focuses on women, but investments in women are also critical to truly fulfilling the other 16 Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as the Secretary-General's new agenda for peace. Women and young people are central to the entire cycle, from conflict prevention to conflict resolution and from peacebuilding to development. Both groups should be seen as important links in the security-development nexus.

We welcome the fact that the Peacebuilding Fund has surpassed its 15 per cent target again this year, and we are focused on achieving the target of earmarking 15 per cent of our official development assistance for gender mainstreaming. We applaud the Swedish delegation and Foreign Minister Wallström for highlighting the case of Afghanistan in her statement. We, too, are focusing on Afghanistan through our KazAid programme, with a multidimensional approach based on conflict prevention and resolution, as well as recovery, reintegration and humanitarian assistance. Last year, in cooperation with Japan and the United Nations Development Programme, Kazakhstan launched a project to promote gender equality in Afghanistan, including by providing policy support and capacity development. National efforts must be reinforced by regional and subregional commitments to strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, which is what Kazakhstan has been attempting to accomplish in Central Asia through the United Nations Women Multi-Country Office in Almaty.

In that context, we believe that the first-ever African Union-United Nations joint mission to African countries on women and peace and security, led by Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed in July, which did so much to create awareness, should become a regular practice. We commend regional organizations for implementing the women and peace and security agenda in their regions, and we especially commend the African Union for its progressive gender mainstreaming within the African Peace and Security Architecture. We acknowledge civil society's important role in improving women's access to leadership and participation in peace processes, and we encourage all Member States to strengthen their engagement with civil society organizations, including women and youth groups. Kazakhstan is committed to continuing the good practice of inviting representatives from women's organizations to brief the Council.

Lastly, enhanced data collection and reporting are also very important for the success of the women and peace and security agenda. We see stagnation in certain indicators and therefore call for enhanced gender analysis of countries' situations. We need expanded and more timely and accurate national gender-disaggregated data and progress reports on the implementation and monitoring of those commitments.

Kazakhstan pledges its unfailing support to the women and peace and security agenda, with the goal of seeing all societies develop new possibilities and potential for human well-being hrough the empowerment of women and girls. Today Ambassador Fodé Seck of Senegal mentioned that women are a majority of the world population. In that regard, I would like to read a short extract from a poem by a famous Kazakh writer, Mukaghali Makatayev.

> "Today women are a majority of the population. We need to support that strength because women mean beauty. Let us add beauty to our planet".

I would like to conclude by saying that only women, in their wisdom, beauty and leadership, can save our fragile world.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank France for organizing today's debate on an issue on which, as has already been said, much remains to be done. We also grateful for the participation of and statements by Chef de Cabinet Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti; Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN-Women; Ms. Charo Mina-Rojas, of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security; and Ms. Michaëlle Jean, Secretary General of the International Organization of La Francophonie.

The women and peace and security agenda will require our persistent attention if it is to achieve real and tangible progress. In that regard, we would like to highlight the periodic work of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, and we align ourselves with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Canada on its behalf. We would also like to highlight the efforts of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, which helps to maintain a systematic approach to the subject on the Security Council's agenda. We particularly appreciate the momentum generated by the Secretary-General for the effective implementation of the women and peace and security agenda.

Uruguay welcomes other initiatives that are helping to achieve the agenda's objectives, such as that of Spain in establishing a network of national focal points for women and peace and security, as well as the efforts of the team of experts from the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict to strengthen national capacities for investigating and prosecuting crimes and protecting victims and witnesses. Gender equality and the empowerment of women are essential conditions for conflict prevention and peacekeeping and key factors in achieving the goals set by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Let us be clear. In Uruguay, when we talk about the empowerment of women, we are talking about creating and ensuring the conditions that women need to exercise their most basic rights to full, individual freedom, without the artificial constraints that relegate them to second-class status. That means the freedom to choose their way of life; to choose how, where and with whom to live their life; and to make decisions for themselves and by themselves on their education, their work and their bodies. In short, we are talking about the freedom to be masters of their own destiny. An empowered woman is a vital instrument for transforming our societies' egalitarian development.

It is the responsibility of States to safeguard women's rights and ensure gender equality, as well as the inclusion and non-discriminatory treatment of women regardless of race, religion, age, sexual orientation, gender identity or any other status. However, it is also the responsibility of organized civil society to be vigilant about their countries' conduct in that regard. States should also work to improve women's participation in mediating, preventing and resolving conflicts, as outlined in resolution 1325 (2000). They have a proven ability to approach, negotiate, understand and empathize in such situations.

Uruguay can attest to all of that. The increase in the numbers of female personnel in the peacekeeping operations in which our country participates, which today is still only a modest 7 per cent of the total, has nevertheless been an enriching element for the quality of the contingent and the results obtained. In particular, in missions such as the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we can attest to the effective role that women have played in building trust in local communities for all the reasons I just mentioned, and even more so among those who have been victims of any kind of sexual violence.

Regrettably, the horrors of gender-based sexual violence continue to constitute one of the most devastating effects of armed conflict around the world. We must take effective measures to eradicate that scourge, but we must also put an end to impunity and restore the dignity of the victims of such crimes. In that regard, we have to rethink our collective approach in order to focus on the victims and survivors, who should receive comprehensive assistance that can ensure that they are able to fully recover from such violations and reintegrate into their societies.

States should maximize their efforts on both the national and international levels to ensure that the perpetrators of these crimes are prosecuted. The International Criminal Court plays a key role in that regard by judging crimes that have been recognized by the Rome Statute as war crimes and crimes against humanity, including those that may constitute crimes of genocide. Consequently, it is the responsibility of the Security Council to ensure that crimes of sexual violence are referred to the Court and that such cases are continuously monitored.

Similarly, we must ensure that United Nations peacekeepers are not part of the problem. In that connection, we welcome recent initiatives by the Secretary-General such as the proposal of a voluntary pact with troop-contributing countries against sexual exploitation and abuse, to which Uruguay has adhered; the establishment of a women's leadership circle, of which Uruguay is honoured to be a member; and the appointment of an advocate for the rights of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Uruguay stresses the importance of carefully educating personnel involved in peace missions in relation to issues of gender and sexual violence in conflicts. In the specific case of my country, prior to deployment, all personnel must undergo a training course on human rights, international humanitarian law, gender issues, child protection and sexual abuse and exploitation, as well as sign a statement in which they agree to comply with the standards of conduct.

The gender perspective must be part of the entire peacekeeping planning process, as well as at the time of review and when it comes to reducing the number of deployed personnel. On this point, the recent cuts to the gender and human rights components of various mandates of certain peace missions are of concern.

We welcome the fact that, since 2000, the agenda on women and peace and security has acquired considerable normative momentum. We also highlight the work done by the bodies established under various human rights instruments with regard to the agenda in their oversight role. I would like to reiterate the need to join forces in order to implement transformative and large-scale initiatives that will ensure that issues related to the women and peace and security agenda are systemically integrated in approaches to prevention and peacekeeping.

Uruguay reaffirms its commitment to the agenda on women and peace and security and to continue working with the United Nations and all Member States for its full and effective implementation.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of France.

I warmly thank the Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General, Ms. Ribeiro Viotti; the Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka; Ms. Mina-Rojas; and the Secretary General of the International Organization of La Francophonie, Ms Michaëlle Jean, for their very enlightening briefings.

I would like to pay particular tribute to the vital role played by civil society in promoting and implementing this very important agenda, on whose behalf Ms. Mina-Rojas delivered a strong and committed message today. I take this opportunity to reiterate France's support for the initiatives of organizations that campaign for respecting and promoting women's rights in the field. Those initiatives must not be hindered, but instead robustly supported and encouraged.

I also welcome the presence and commitment of the Secretary General of the International Organization of La Francophonie, Ms. Michaëlle Jean, to this agenda. The efforts of the countries of La Francophonie indeed symbolize a strong and important message. I would like to say another word of support, together with Germany, for the determination of the African Union and Ghana to establish a network of African women leaders. We also welcome Italy's initiative to build a network of women mediators in the Mediterranean, which was launched yesterday in Rome.

I turn first to the issue of our collective commitment with regard to the practical implementation of this agenda and the participation of women, before briefly presenting the efforts undertaken by France on a daily basis to that end.

We simply cannot resolve crises without ensuring the protection and participation of women. Women must be protected — that is essential — but they must also be fully involved in conflict prevention and resolution. That must be a genuine common priority not only in our words but also in our actions to ensure both equality and efficiency. The participation of women in political processes and in conflict prevention and resolution remains grossly inadequate: from 1992 to 2011, 4 per cent of peace agreement signatories and fewer than 10 per cent of negotiators participating in peace talks were women. The report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security (S/2017/861) refers clearly to this state of affairs and underscores the fact that some areas, such as disarmament, are still closed off to women. That shows just how much we must change the breadth of the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. We must move from words to actions. We are not talking about a peripheral issue; we are talking about a pivotal matter that should lie at the heart of the daily work of the United Nations.

The Security Council has adopted eight ambitious resolutions on this subject; however, it is quite clear that their implementation remains woefully insufficient. Progress has certainly been noted, particularly within the Council: three-quarters of resolutions take the women and peace and security agenda into account and an informal group of experts has been set up. A network of national focal points has also been established. But now Governments must embrace their responsibility and develop national, and even regional, plans and implement them. In short, it is time to take practical action.

It is also necessary to set aside space to implement a global, frequent and responsible evaluation of the initiatives we carry out. We need to step up our analysis conflicts against the backdrop of gender, including through an exchange of best practices. Measuring progress will also be important, as it will present a challenge for years to come. We are well aware of the fact that — and this has been said, but it bears repeating — when women participate in peace processes, the lasting success of peace agreements over a period of at least two years increases by 20 per cent, and the likelihood of an agreement remaining in place for at least 15 years increases by 25 per cent. Once again, therefore, that is an obligation that is not just a matter of equality but of efficiency. The United Nations itself must be exemplary in that regard, and we welcome the establishment by the Secretary-General of a pool of female talent for access to leadership positions.

France is committed to staying at the forefront of the international community's efforts to implement the women and peace and security agenda. I would now like to briefly present our national action plan for the implementation of this agenda. First, however, allow me to recall the fact that our parity law has undeniably enabled France to achieve decisive progress in women't representation in the political life of my country. The French Government has achieved parity, as has the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations here in New York.

More specifically, France is implementing its second national action plan on women and peace and security, which covers the period 2015-2018. It is built on five pillars: participation; protection, which during conflict means primarily protection against violence, but also more broadly protection for the rights of women; the fight against impunity; prevention, especially through raising awareness of violence against women; and promoting the women and peace and security agenda. For each of those pillars we are implementing initiatives at the national, multilateral and concrete cooperation levels. Allow me to briefly mention a few examples.

First of all, France is taking action against impunity when crimes are committed against women, including to enable women's access to justice. To that end, we fully support the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy against sexual exploitation and abuse. In the same spirit, the President of the French Republic, Mr. Emmanuel Macron, joined the circle of leaders at the high-level segment of the General Assembly. Along the same lines, the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Mr. Jean-Yves Le Drian, signed the pact between the United Nations and Member States. In that regard, we commend the recent appointment by the Secretary-General of an advocate for the rights of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Our efforts are also ongoing daily on the ground. For instance, we continue to support humanitarian programmes aimed at assisting women affected by the consequences of the crises in Afghanistan; the Central African Republic; Lebanon, as a result of the Syrian crisis; and Nigeria. We are also undertaking numerous projects to protect women from human trafficking, as a priority.

We must also more implement more coherently the women and peace and security agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. Our official development assistance already has fully incorporated the gender dimension, and the number of projects with a direct impact on the lives of women is rising as well. France has also undertaken a comprehensive effort and set specific goals to increase women's participation in its armed forces. Appointments have risen significantly, and women's representation has virtually doubled since 1998 to 15 per cent of overall troops today, which, of course, is not fully sufficient, but progress continues to be made. The armed forces, including peacekeeping-operation contingents, must also be made more aware of gender issues, and to that end gender advisers' functions, as has been mentioned, must be sustained within these operations.

Lastly, our national action plan dovetails closely with the European Union's efforts, and here I am thinking in particular of initiatives to address the situation of women in Afghanistan and Syria and of the recent joint initiative between the United Nations and the European Union, known as the Spotlight Initiative, which will make possible specific responses to violence against women.

France can be counted on to continue to do everything in its power to advance this agenda, which is at the very heart of the activities and values of the United Nations. Our vision is that of living in a world in which women are no longer victims of violence but can take their rightful place in conflict settlement and in the political, economic and social life of their countries. This is an imperative for equality and effectiveness. Women are the key to lasting peace and security.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

The representative of Ukraine has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Vitrenko (Ukraine): To be fully consistent with the agenda for today's meeting, let me once again quote from the statement made by Ukraine's Vice-Prime Minister, which was probably lost in translation for some delegations.

Women make up 58 per cent, or almost 1 million, of the 1.7 million internally displaced persons in Ukraine. This is all an undisputed direct consequence of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, aggression that has been recognized worldwide, including by the General Assembly, which unequivocally qualified the Russian Federation as an occupying Power in my country.

As such, and if Russia is so concerned about the fate of women in the territories it occupies in my country, it should stop sending troops, weapons and ammunition to eastern Ukraine. Until that happens, Russia is not in a position to lecture others on a situation it intentionally created and continues to stir up.

As for the so-called humanitarian assistance provided by Russia to Ukraine, I just wonder who is to thank for that — probably its proxies in Donbas, since, for example, the last so-called humanitarian convoy contained at least two modern Russian tanks and a full load of ammunition for them. Nice example indeed.

Finally, there are hundreds of Ukrainian prisoners in Russian captivity. We are doing everything in our power to get them out of Russian prisons, irrespective of their gender or political views. Once free from captivity, some of them carry out, in a completely free manner, an active political life and occupy high-profile political posts, including in the Parliament.

The President (*spoke in French*): I wish to remind speakers that they are requested to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. This is the customary statement. Dedications with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the text in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber. I wish to inform all concerned that we will be carrying on this open debate right through the lunch hour, as have a large number of speakers.

I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia.

Ms. Holguín Cuéllar (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I thank you for having convened this open debate, almost 17 years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security. I should like also to thank the Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka; Michaëlle Jean, of the International Organization of la Francophonie; and Charo Mina-Rojas, Colombia's National Coordinator of Advocacy and Outreach for the Black Communities' Process, for their contributions.

This meeting represents an opportunity to share best practices and the challenges encountered in the implementation of this agenda, but above all, in the face of new challenges, to revitalize the discussion and take effective action ensuring the participation and leadership of women in peace and peacekeeping processes.

Our process, which put an end to the conflict, was characterized by an active and major participation of women. During the negotiation phase, we were at the table, I myself as negotiator, and in the negotiating team more broadly. In addition, the work of the sub-commission on gender was a cross-cutting presence throughout the entire final agreement, as recognized in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/861), which states that the percentage of signed peace agreements containing gender-specific provisions increased only because the Colombian peace agreement contained more than 100 such provisions.

Close to one year after the signing of the agreement, Columbia remains committed to ensuring the participation of women in the implementation of the peace agenda. We have major challenges and goals in this phase, and the role of women is vital in this respect. To this end, we have created the institutions necessary to implement the agreement, including a specialized gender unit made up of seven women leaders of organizations of rural women, victims of armed conflict and civil-society organizations. They will help us to achieve the transformations to which the agreement is directed so as to offer women, especially rural women, better living conditions, which will translate into their empowerment and economic autonomy, as well as the creation of work spaces in decent conditions, in a framework of equality, so as to break the cycles of violence that violate the rights of women. We are also working to incorporate a gender focus in the framework for the implementation of the agreement.

As important as is the presence of women during negotiations, it will be equally important in the implementation process. The participation in the peacebuilding phase, which will take us several years, is tangible in the composition of the institutions created for the purpose of transitional justice, whose members were elected in September. In the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, 28 of the 51 judges are women, including the President, and eight are Afro-descendants or indigenous people. In addition, a woman was elected Director of the Search Unit for Missing Person.

Colombia recognizes the need to ensure accountability for crimes of sexual violence committed in the framework of conflict. That is why the final agreement provides that such crimes cannot be subject to amnesty. In addition, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace plans to create an investigation unit with a special team for cases of sexual violence.

I wish also to highlight the fact that the first special political mission agreed by the Security Council was the one with the largest ever number of women — almost 20 per cent of observers. We hope that the second will maintain or even surpass those levels.

We believe that our process, with its advantages and drawbacks, can be one of the references for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), in a way that contributes to achieving tangible results, the realization of projects and the development of joint initiatives, and so that lessons learned can be used to advantage in other contexts. The past years have shown us that committed work brings about significant progress and tangible results that have a positive impact on the realities of women, but they are, of course, not enough.

As Ms. Mina-Rojas said at the beginning of today's debate, the peace process has not only put an end to war and violence, it has also helped us deal together with the roots of the conflict. That is what we aim to do with the Agreement; that is the challenge we face from now on in terms of its implementation. We need the unwavering commitment of States, as well as the effective work of the entire United Nations system, in particular of the Security Council, to ensure genuine participation by women, and thereby contribute to achieving the just and equitable societies that we all desire.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Gender, Child and Family of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Ms. Safou (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, Mr. President, I would like to welcome the accession of your country, France, to the presidency of the Security Council and to congratulate you for the great skill with which you have led the work of the Council during this month of October. I would also like to thank you for convening today's open debate on women and peace and security, a theme that reflects the tragedy that many women around the world endure, particularly certain women in the eastern and the central parts of my country.

I pay well-earned tribute to His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General, for his assiduous efforts aimed at seeking peace in my country. I also thank Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka for the support UN-Women has given to the women of the Democratic Republic of Congo. I also welcome the presence of Ms. Michaëlle Jean, Secretary General of the International Organization of La Francophonie.

My country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which has been affected by many years of armed conflict, with nefarious repercussions, particularly for women and children, has made a firm commitment to the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security. This debate affords us an opportunity to briefly outline the efforts undertaken by my Government to address this situation — and to implement resolution 1325 (2000) — which we have done by adopting a plan of action plan with 10 priority thrusts in 2013.

The plan of action is currently under participatory and inclusive review with significant collaboration from civil society at both the national and international levels, in particular with the participation of the Cordaid Foundation, Diakonia Sweden and UN-Women. The Government has undertaken an assessment of the current plan of action so as to identify its strengths and weaknesses and to collect statistical data from 10 provinces, while awaiting data from the remaining provinces, with a view to reaching more women at the local level.

It is worth noting that the implementation of the national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) has led in gender-mainstreaming in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, as well as capacity-building for women leaders in negotiation and mediation in terms of influencing decision-making in times of crisis and post-conflict periods in the Democratic Republic of Congo. More than 500 women leaders and prominent local individuals have seen their capacities strengthened in the areas of conflict resolution and notions of gender. That has enabled them to contribute to the peaceful resolution of conflicts in provinces mired in ethnic conflict.

It should be noted that the Democratic Republic of Congo has undertaken a review of our national strategy to combat sexual and gender-based violence, adopted an armed forces action plan and signed the joint compact between the Government and the United Nations on the fight against sexual violence in conflict. Through the compact, our Government has reaffirmed its commitment to shoring up a zero-tolerance policy for crimes of sexual violence and to adopting measures to fight impunity by initiating proceedings against perpetrators. Along those lines, from July to December 2014, 135 judicial sentences were handed down, punishing high-level military and police officers, and in 2016 the military justice system rendered 111 decisions against perpetrators of sexual violence.

At the security level, I would like to commend the determination of the Head of State, Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, to implement the relevant provisions of resolution 1325 (2000), in particular by the promotion to rank and raising to high-level positions of nine women army brigadier generals and a number of female senior officers. It is worth mentioning the appointment of 20 women to active duty in the battalion of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo, which operated in the Central African Republic in connection with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic.

I cannot conclude without noting that my country rightly appreciates the support given to it by the United Nations and the international community.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Ms. Kofler (Germany): At the outset, I want to point out that Germany aligns itself with the statements to be delivered by the observer of the European Union and the representative of Canada, the latter of whom will be speaking on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

But let me first of all thank France for hosting today's open debate, and especially for putting a renewed focus on the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda.

I would also like to thank the Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General and the Executive Director of UN-Women for their insightful briefings. I thank Ms. Mina-Rojas for speaking about the participation of women in the Colombian peace process. We also greatly appreciate Ms. Jean's provision of practical examples of women's leadership. It is very much welcomed that the International Organization of La Francophonie is participating in this debate.

Today's debate places a much welcome focus on concerting action and commitments. I would like to put forward four specific ideas on how we can step up implementation of the agenda of resolution 1325 (2000).

First, we need to support practical initiatives to translate the rhetoric about women's participation in peace processes into action. As the Executive Director of UN-Women mentioned — and I want to thank her for it — Germany has decided to back the African Union in developing a network of African women leaders that provides women leaders from across the continent with a platform for exchange with respect to their experiences. The network, launched in June in New York, and is already producing results. Women leaders from across Africa are starting to share experiences about their respective activities and initiatives through the network. Its next meeting will take place in Addis Ababa next spring.

Germany fully backs the initiative led by Ghana and the African Union to establish a Group of Friends of the African Women Leaders Network in New York. The network needs our political support, and the Group can play an important role in that regard. We also welcome the fact that, under the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General and the African Union Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, several women leaders conducted their first joint African Union-United Nations solidarity mission this summer, to Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We hope that more such solidarity missions will follow in future.

Secondly, we need to continue the international discussion on the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda between the annual open debates. Spain has set up a network of capital-level focal points on women, peace and security, and it is encouraging to see that more than 60 countries from all regions have appointed focal points. Germany will take over the chairmanship of the network in 2018, followed by Namibia in 2019, and we will host its next meeting, in Berlin, next spring. We hope that many delegations will be able to send a focal point to Berlin and use the opportunity to continue today's discussion.

The Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security of the Security Council has become an indispensable tool here in New York in keeping the Council's attention on women and peace and security between the open debates. It has alreay looked into four specific situations in 2017. We commend Sweden, Uruguay and the United Kingdom for their work in leading that Group and encourage it to continue its approach of looking at individual situations more than once, thereby following up on implementation.

Thirdly, we can do better in linking up the implementation of the Security Council's agenda on women and peace and security with other agendas, most important the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, but also the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. This year, Germany adopted its second-generation national action plan for the period 2017-2020, and we have tried to emphasize some of the interlinkages. For instance, in line with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women general recommendation No.30, our new action plan further strengthens the qualitative involvement of civil society organizations. Civil society representatives have strongly contributed to our second action plan, and we have created new consultation mechanisms for our engagement with civil society.

Finally, we need to take specific action to prioritize the implementation of the women and peace and security in United Nations peacekeeping. Peacekeeping missions need to have the necessary human-rights and gender expertise. Having gender expertise integrated into all mission components is not only nice to have, but is at the core of mandate-implementation and lasting peace and security. We therefore welcome the Secretary-General's initiative to launch a United Nations senior women talent pipeline.

However, as Member States, we must also do more to inform, motivate and nominate women for peacekeeping missions. Germany recently awarded five female peacekeepers for their outstanding service in peace operations. Their contributions to the success of those missions are essential, whether as the captain of the German frigate training the Lebanese Armed Forces as part of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, or as the military officer overseeing reconnaissance in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali or as human resource officers in Colombia. We also provide gender-sensitive and gender-specific training to third countries, for instance in Accra, and support United Nations police in their work to implement resolution 1325 (2000).

The Security Council's women and peace and security agenda remains a priority for Germany in the United Nations. The Council can count on Germany's support in putting the rhetoric on women and peace and security into action.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Guatemala.

Ms. Jovel Polanco (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a privilege to participate as Minister for Foreign Affairs in today's debate on such an important topic, and it is a happy coincidence that I am here today. I am the second woman to have been Minister for Foreign Affairs in the history of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, which illustrates how things are changing in Guatemala.

In recent years, we have seen that the significant participation of women quantifiably strengthens protection efforts, accelerates economic recovery, furthers peacebuilding efforts and leads to sustainable peace. That is why, every year, the Security Council continues to pave the way for reducing the vulnerability of women and girls. All of that is based on the core premise of resolution 1325 (2000), which once again convinces us that, without security for women and girls, we cannot achieve lasting peace. Today, through this debate, we are providing added value to ensure the full implementation of the women and peace and security agenda.

Guatemala fully supports the importance that the Secretary-General assigns to conflict prevention and early warning, which is the stage to which we must pay particular attention in order to prevent human rights violations of the most vulnerable — women, girls, children and adolescents.

Of particular concern is the fact that sexual violence continues to be used as an instrument of war to terrorize populations. We cannot allow it to be used to generate income through trafficking and sexual slavery, much less allow women and girls to be used as objects. We therefore strongly condemn all of those heinous acts, because, apart from constituting a clear violation of international law and international humanitarian law, it is a denial of human dignity. For that reason, we believe that it is of paramount importance to make progress in the fight against impunity, improve women's access to justice and strengthen the institutions of the justice system in the light of those atrocious crimes, both at the national and international levels.

Resolution 1325 (2000) has brought about important changes in the world, which has allowed us to recognize that the equality and empowerment of women and girls are critical for international peace and security. Together with the other seven resolutions that have been adopted by the Security Council on women and peace, they constitute powerful tools for the full exercise of women's rights, their access to justice and their equal participation in all decision-making, both in conflict and post-conflict situations and peaceful scenarios, which has led to substantive changes for consolidating the rule of law.

National action plans for implementing resolution 1325 (2000) constitute a powerful tool for advancing women's rights. In order to initiate, monitor and comply with international commitments for the search of international peace and security in gender issues, Guatemala has had a national action plan in place since July, which is one more achievement for the country in protecting the rights of women in conflict and post-conflict situations.

Another important aspect is the role that women play in peacekeeping operations. Guatemala participates by deploying contingents in areas of armed conflicts, and therefore acknowledges the contribution of resolution 1325 (2000) in laying the foundations to incorporate a gender perspective into field missions.

Finally, my delegation believes it is necessary that joint efforts continue among States and the United Nations to support measures that increase the participation of women in peace processes, including in the contexts of peacekeeping and peace consolidation at all levels. Nowadays, inclusive processes should be the rule, not the exception.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Panama.

Ms. Flores Herrera (Panama): I have the honour of speaking today on behalf of the members of the Human Security Network, a cross-regional network made up of Austria, Chile, Costa Rica, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, Norway, Slovenia, Switzerland, Thailand, South Africa as an observer, and my own country, Panama. The Human Security Network is an informal group of States that promotes the integration of a human security approach into policies and programmes at the regional, national and international levels.

Seventeen years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) and two years after the global review of its implementation, this open debate is needed to focus on the concrete implementation of the normative framework. Through the adoption of resolution 2242 (2015), the Security Council once again reaffirmed its commitment to the agenda and to the need to coordinate responses and accelerate implementation. We particularly welcome the work of the Council's Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security as an important tool to ensure that the agenda receives adequate attention in the Council's work. The Human Security Network calls upon Member States, United Nations entities and regional and subregional organizations to support other Member States in their efforts to implement resolution 1325 (2000) and all subsequent resolutions.

There is a need for greater recognition and support of women's full and effective participation in all stages of conflict resolution and post-conflict reconciliation processes, so that peace agreements can be more effective. Women can, and must, play a key role in conflict prevention and resolution and in the construction and decision-making of sustainable peace processes. We welcome the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security programmes that have supported women as agents of change in achieving and sustaining peace. We call for greater application of the human security approach to advance inclusive prevention and peacebuilding efforts. Since our debate last year (see S/PV.7793), a number of important developments and events have taken place within the United Nations that have helped ensure the advancement of this important agenda.

First, we welcome the Secretary-General's commitment and his strategy on gender parity to reach 50/50. We also welcome the launch of Spotlight — a European Union-United Nations initiative aimed at combating violence against women by supporting women's empowerment.

Secondly, the High-level Political Forum thematic review of Sustainable Development Goal 5, on achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, saw the integration of the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We welcome that ongoing process.

Thirdly, the recent high-level meeting on the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and the adoption of the political declaration demonstrated a renewed commitment to the protection of victims of forced labour, sexual servitude and other forms of exploitation and abuse, which target the weakest and most vulnerable — women and girls, but also boys. We cannot turn a blind eye to the violence exerted by extremist groups, which infringe upon the rights, dignity and integrity of their lives.

The Network expresses its profound concern about the impact of forced displacement on women and girls. Addressing that matter calls for the involvement of women in the design and implementation of humanitarian action and early recovery measures. That should also take into account the increasing need for sustained donor support to host countries and communities, so that they can appropriately support women's resilience. Doing so will strengthen the humanitarian development nexus and improve coordination with peacebuilding and the protection of human rights.

We also call for greater efforts to promote and respect the human rights of women and girls, as well as to strengthen all efforts to effectively address gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence. For too, long sexual violence has been committed on a systematic and widespread scale as crimes against humanity and it has been used as a weapon of war. Women and girls are today targets of sexual and gender-based violence at an alarming rate.

We stress the importance of fighting impunity and ensuring accountability under national or international jurisdictions. In that regard, we welcome the Secretary-General's initiative of convening a high-level meeting on combating sexual exploitation and abuse, which served as a visible demonstration of the solidarity of the international community in condemning and combating that scourge, while placing the rights and dignity of victims at the forefront of collective efforts.

In conclusion, women's empowerment and meaningful participation are a cornerstone of any prevention and protection response. The economic, political and social empowerment of women and girls reduces their vulnerability and enhances their ability to protect themselves and exercise their rights. We must ensure that women's and girls' interests are fully respected and systematically integrated into all peace processes.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Liechtenstein.

Ms. Oehri (Liechtenstein): We reiterate our strong support for the women and peace and security agenda. The adoption of eight resolutions on the topic by the Securit Council reflects the important progress we have made in this area. However, we are still very far from achieving the goals we set for ourselves, and have to tackle a significant gap between decisions on paper and the reality on the ground.

The data in the latest report (S/2017/861) of the Secretary-General point to significant barriers in women's meaningful participation in mediation processes. The full participation of women in mediation is essential to achieving sustainable peace. Root causes to conflicts cannot be fully addressed, and societal traumas cannot be overcome, when half of the population is excluded from peace processes. In addition, women often shoulder a large share of responsibility in communities during conflict and recovery, which makes their participation even more important.

Access to justice is a crucial component of peaceful, just and inclusive societies, as reflected in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16. But structural inequalities, poverty and discrimination often hinder women's access to justice and security, as well as transitional justice processes. Gender-responsive legal and judicial systems are fundamental for building and sustaining resilient societies. Liechtenstein is proud to be a member of the pathfinders for peaceful, just and inclusive societies, which lead on the implementation of SDG 16 and provide a basis for exchange of best practices in that area.

The latest report (S/2017/249) of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence documents 19 situations, involving 46 parties to conflict, of committing or instigating patterns of rape and other forms of sexual violence. While women and girls are particularly vulnerable to becoming victims of such violence in conflict situations, men and boys are also targeted. It is well documented that, among other purposes, armed forces or groups, including groups involved in violent extremism, recruit both girls and boys for sexual purposes. Moreover, men and boys often represent the majority of detainees during armed conflict and are highly vulnerable to sexual violence. A prevailing culture of silence and harmful stereotypes oftens prevent male victims from coming forward, which further reduces the prospects for accountability.

Transitional justice mechanisms often adopt a gender-binary interpretation of sexual violence, identifying women as victims and men as perpetrators. As a consequence, male survivors face limited or no access to important reparations and psychosocial and medical services. At the same time, stereotyping women as victims can hinder them in fully using their potential to live life in dignity.

Sexual and gender-based violence can constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes and, in specific circumstances, elements of genocide. Those are the core crimes under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which is the centrepiece of our common fight against impunity for serious crimes under international law. The most efficient protection against conflict-related sexual violence is ensuring that it does not happen in the first place.

Liechtenstein commends the Secretary-General for his focus on prevention and would like to recall that 114 States have signed the code of conduct of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group on Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes — pledging to support timely and decisive action to prevent and end such crimes. We call on the remaining States to join the code of conduct, and thereby help ensure that the Council delivers on its mandate to protect civilians from mass atrocities.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Tunisia.

Mr. Khiari (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank the French presidency for having convened this meeting in order to take stock of the achievements made and prospects for the holistic and full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). The resolution is indubitably a cornerstone in many regards, by acknowledging the critical role of women in the promotion of the culture of peace and resilience within our societies and the critical nature of their participation in drafting and implementing post-conflict strategies. Successively adopted resolutions by the Security Council and the General Assembly contributed to further fine-tuning the prospects provided by the main resolution, in terms of women's leadership during peacebuilding processes and the assured added-value provided by civil society actors and others on the whole.

There is no need to recall the devastating repercussions of war and conflict on people, especially on the most vulnerable. Unfortunately, we see that on virtually a daily basis. Women and children are the principal victims. Despite the progress that has been achieved since 2000, which has been reflected in an active participation in peace movements and a growing role in post-conflict rebuilding, women remain essentially absent in negotiations and institutions for peacebuilding. That consistently hampers the process of conflict resolution. In our view, women's involvement remains critical. Over the long-term, that will make possible a gender balance in public institutions and with regard to legal reform. That was an observation made in the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/861). Tunisia thanks him for the quality of the assessment and recommendations contained therein. In particular, we welcome the initiative to assess how well women are represented in peace processes, as part of the reform project. We welcome that initiative because that approach recognizes the important role played by women in mediation, conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts. In addition, my delegation would like to recognize the efforts undertaken to implement resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, in connection with the prevention of violent extremism. Nothing highlights the validity of the gender approach as much as the development of measures aimed at combating radicalization, or rehabilitating or reintegrating women returning from conflict zones.

My country's delegation also welcomes the publication of the Secretary-General's strategy on gender parity at the United Nations. The recommendations developed are not solely focused on management issues, but also promote the need to revisit the role of women in peacekeeping operations. In that regard, we support the call made by the Secretary-General to the members of the Security Council to continue to pay special attention to women's issues in the area of peace and security when "new crises arise, others worsen or when the Council focuses on counter-terrorism or the deployment of contingents".

Turning again to Tunisia, the Code of Personal Status was adopted in 1956 and was indeed the foundation of modern Tunisia, perhaps even more so than the country's first Constitution, which was adopted in 1959. That illustrates the importance of women's empowerment in developing a modern citizenship-based policy for Tunisian society since the establishment of the first Republic of Tunisia. That reform momentum was reflected in the new 2014 Constitution, which guarantees and protects women's rights. It should be recalled that women were on the front lines during the fight for democracy. They continue to be change agents for long-term stability.

In line with resolution 1325 (2000), the Tunisian Parliament recently unanimously adopted a historic law to eliminate all violence against women. That text is the outcome of the joint efforts of the Government and human rights organizations and associations. It is important to adhere to international instruments and standards in the area of violence against women, and, for the first time, to recognize threats posed to women's economic rights as gender-based violence against women. Tunisia has underscored that the adoption of that law was complemented by the establishment of a committee made up of renowned intellectuals and academics, tasked with studying the issue of individual freedoms and equality in all areas. Those new approaches only serve to underscore the irreversible nature of our efforts to eliminate all forms of gender-based violence.

One of the goals of the annual debate on the women and peace and security agenda is to assess the progress made in the various countries in developing national action plans on resolution 1325 (2000). My delegation would like point out that a three-year project undertaken under the auspices of the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Ministry of Social Affairs, with the support of UN-Women and other partners, is under way. That project, which is participatory in nature and involves various Tunisian stakeholders, aims to implement a national action plan for Tunisia on the women and peace and security agenda.

According to the poet Louis Aragon, the future of men is women. To that end, a catalyst for resilience and development is required in the societal model to ensure that peace is maintained and progress visible and measurable. It reflects the vital nature of everyone's commitment to promoting the women and peace and security agenda.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Sinirlioğlu (Turkey): As Chair of the MIKTA Group for 2017, Turkey has the honour to deliver the following statement on behalf of the MIKTA countries, namely, Mexico, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Turkey and Australia.

At the outset, we would like to express our appreciation to the French presidency of the Security Council for organizing today's open debate. We also thank the Secretary-General for his recent report (S/2017/861).

The MIKTA countries welcome the continued attention paid to the women and peace and security agenda at the Security Council. We recognize the key role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding. We underscore the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts in the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. We also believe in the need to increase the role of women in decision-making on conflict prevention and resolution.

In that regard, let me note that all MIKTA countries are members of the Group of Friends for Gender Parity. The MIKTA countries believe that achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are critical to conflict prevention, as well as the broader efforts to maintain international peace and security. That is also key for the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We consider resolution 1325 (2000) to be an important milestone for addressing the impact of armed conflict on women and girls. Successive Security Council resolutions have also contributed to the establishment of a sound, normative framework in that regard. We attach importance to ensuring collaboration and coordination through the United Nations system in the implementation of those resolutions and continue to encourage more women to participate in the United Nations peacekeeping process and missions.

Despite the progress achieved so far, we still face daunting challenges. Women and girls continue to be disproportionately affected by the impact of conflicts around the world. In that context, we are alarmed by the targeting of women and girls by gender-based violence, in particular rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of conflict. Such appalling acts deserve to be condemned. The MIKTA countries also attach importance to the efforts to improve the United Nations system-wide approach to preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse.

Massive forced displacements caused by the devastating effects of conflicts continue to be a source of grave concern. Women and girls face severe consequences in humanitarian crisis situations. The MIKTA countries are committed to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. It is imperative to develop gender-responsive humanitarian polices that ensure that women and girls have access to basic services, including health and education. It was encouraging to see that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls emerged as an overarching theme of the commitments made at the first World Humanitarian Summit, held in Istanbul last year. It is important to transform such commitments into action. It is also crucial to redouble our efforts to prevent women and girls from becoming victims of human trafficking in conflict and post-conflict situations. We can achieve meaningful progress on that front only through coordinated and consolidated measures.

At a time when the causes and effects of conflicts easily spread across borders, regional and international coordination and cooperation remain important tools in addressing the challenges we face. With that understanding, MIKTA, as a cross-regional group of countries on different continents, underscores its readiness to contribute to international efforts for taking forward the women and peace and security agenda.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Nepal.

Mr. Bhattarai (Nepal): Allow me to read out an abridged version of my statement.

First of all, I thank the French presidency of the Security Council for convening this annual debate on women and peace and security. I also thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2017/861), and the briefers for their updates and insights.

From the days of the Council's inception and the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), in 2000, Nepal has been a proactive supporter of the cause of women and peace and security. I am pleased to inform the Council about how far Nepal has come. In 2011, Nepal adopted a national action plan to implement resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008). The Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction coordinates the plan's implementation, while its oversight is ensured by a high-level steering committee co-chaired by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Peace and Reconstruction, with members drawn from relevant ministries and civil society organizations.

Nepal has made explicit efforts to localize its national action plan, with localization guidelines in place since 2013. With the mandatory provision of 33 per cent women's representation in local peace committees, Nepal's national action plan has been an example of a transparent, inclusive and participatory process, with the close involvement of conflict victims and civil society organizations. This example has been well shared with countries in the region and outside. The success of the first national action plan has led us to the soon-to-be-adopted second national action plan, which focuses on sexual violence, particularly during conflict.

Eager to catch up with the global average of gender parity in current deployment, Nepal is committed to progressively attaining the United Nations goal of 15 per cent females in peacekeeping operations, and has employed inclusive policies to encourage more females to join the national security forces. In the spirit of moving from zero tolerance to zero cases, Nepal has endorsed the Kigali Principles on the Protection of Civilians and signed the Secretary-General's voluntary compact on preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse. The United Nations policies on sexual exploitation and abuse and the protection of human rights are fully incorporated in the predeployment training courses for our peacekeepers.

Through its own experiences as a United Nations peacekeeping and civilian protection partner since 1958 and as the sixth largest troop- and police-contributing country on the one hand, and as a country emerging from its own armed conflict, on the other, Nepal has come to believe that women's increased role in the national context significantly complements the United Nations aspiration of women playing a greater role at the global level.

In Nepal's case, women's increased representation in legislative and Government bodies and State institutions since 2007 has directly contributed to fostering good governance and inclusive societies. The mandatory 33 per cent representation of women, guaranteed under the new constitution for both federal and provincial-level legislatures, will qualitatively enhance the empowerment and ownership of women in all walks of national life. Already, Nepal has seen women in the positions of Head of State, Speaker of the Legislature-Parliament and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court at the same time. The National Women's Commission is now an independent and powerful constitutional body with an overall mandate to monitor and safeguard the rights and interests of women.

The recent local level elections, where women have secured nearly half of the leadership positions — beyond the constitutional guarantee of 40 per cent — is expected to generate further multiplier effects to ensure the maximum inclusion and participation of women in leadership positions, legislation, and governance. Moreover, there is a 33 per cent quota for certain positions in Government services, including in security forces. The gender responsive budget, introduced in 2006 has now reached over 35 per cent of the total budget.

In conclusion, Nepal believes that the meaningful engagement of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, as well as in sustaining peace and securing the implementation of Council resolutions, has greatly complemented our own efforts. Our national experience suggests that the peace process would not be complete without the full, equal and effective participation of women. As a country emerging from a successful domestic peace process, Nepal stands ready to share its experience and lessons learned through the constructive engagement of women in conflict prevention and resolution, as well as post-conflict restructuring and rebuilding — all gearing towards the timely achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Slovenia.

Ms. Kuret (Slovenia): Let me begin by sincerely thanking France for organizing this open debate and the Secretary-General for his annual report (S/2017/861).

Slovenia aligns itself with the statements delivered by the observer of the European Union and by representative of Panama on behalf of the Human Security Network, and would like to make some additional comments and remarks in its national capacity.

The review of Slovenia's first national action plan showed our contribution to the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security at different levels, especially in the international and regional organization, and through the participation in international operations and missions. We have also helped to promote the implementation of the resolution in the region of the Western Balkans. More than 20 projects have been carried out in cooperation with civil society to empower women in Africa, the Middle East and Afghanistan.

Since we believe that it is imperative to eliminate barriers to gender equality and to ensure the meaningful participation of women, we are continuing to support different projects in that regard, including by contributing funds to support the NATO/Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council Policy for the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security. We have, for example, requested that Slovenia's financial contribution in 2017, which amounts to €500,000 for the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, be used for projects that focus on the advancement of female members in the Afghan forces.

At the national level, important achievements have been made in education and training on the women and peace and security agenda, which were systematically introduced throughout the Slovene armed forces. In 2015, a permanent position of gender adviser within the General Staff of the Slovene armed forces was established, as was a network of gender advisers. We are happy to report that in 2016, almost 10 per cent of military staff and more than 20 per cent of police personnel deployed to international operations and missions were women. Moreover, this spring, Slovenia gladly answered to the United Nations call to appoint women in command positions by contributing the first woman contingent commander to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon.

But events in the international community also demand activities outside of the action plan. In that regard, Slovenia has gained important experience in integrating the gender perspective into the management of migration movements, and shared its knowledge in the region. Cooperation and partnership with different stakeholders are crucial to the realization of that agenda on the ground. Therefore, we gladly participate in different networks, such as the global Women, Peace and Security National Focal Points Network and the recently established Mediterranean Women Mediators Network.

As we speak of women's equal and meaningful participation and leadership in peace-related activities, let me add that the political participation of women in Slovenia is excellent. Half of the Government is comprised of women, including both the Minister of Defence and the Minister of the Interior. I am also very pleased that yesterday's first released index on women, peace and security placed Slovenia in fourth place. That is why we believe that the integration of the gender perspective into peace and security is not just a women's issue; it concerns men, too.

Let me conclude by noting that we should also encourage men's participation and leadership in the promotion of gender equality. I would like to take this opportunity to commend the Secretary-General's action in both regards.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Grant (Canada): I am pleased to speak first on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, an informal network of 51 interested Member States chaired by Canada, representing all five regional groups of the United Nations. I will then make brief remarks in my national capacity.

On the seventeenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), the Group reaffirms its unwavering support for the Council's work on this important agenda. Despite an increasingly robust normative framework on women, peace, and security, we emphasize that real, tangible progress lies in implementation. In that regard, much remains to be done. We applaud the countries that have established or renewed national action plans in the past year. We reiterate that such plans must be coupled with sufficient resources to deliver results. Such implementation will also directly contribute to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, agreed to by all Member States.

We wish to thank Spain for its initiative to establish the Women, Peace and Security National Focal Points Network and for organizing the first substantive meeting in Alicante and its follow-up in New York. We look forward to Germany and Namibia chairing the Focal Points Network in 2018 and 2019, respectively. Furthermore, we wish to highlight regional initiatives which can multiply efforts towards more effective implementation.

The Group welcomes the Secretary-General's leadership on conflict prevention and sustaining peace and notes that the effective implementation of the women and peace and security agenda directly contributes to these objectives. Indeed, we know that gender-based violence and the repression of women's human rights is correlated with the outbreak of conflict We also know that women's participation has a positive impact on the credibility and durability of peace agreements. Therefore, it is all the more essential to include gender considerations and the meaningful participation of women in early warning, mediation and conflict resolution efforts, as well as the mainstreaming of gender-specific language and the human rights of women in peace agreements. A greater role for women also needs to be ensured in post-conflict peacebuilding and economic recovery.

This approach should also apply to the Security Council's work in preventing and addressing conflict. In this regard, we welcome the ongoing work undertaken by the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security to facilitate a more systematic approach to the Council's agenda, including in resolutions, statements, reporting and visits to the field, as well as regular input from civil society. Indeed, we recognize the importance of engaging with and supporting civil society in delivering real impact on this agenda.

The Group highlights the need to further the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in United Nations peacekeeping, both in terms of women's participation and gender expertise and mainstreaming into doctrine and all planning documents. Women play an indispensable role in peacekeeping and their participation at all levels is key to the operational effectiveness of missions. We must therefore redouble efforts and engage in new and creative thinking to resolve persistent gaps and structural barriers to female participation and leadership. Separately, peacekeeping operations need to be equipped with appropriate gender-responsive conflict analysis and expertise. We are deeply concerned that cutting, downgrading and underresourcing gender advisors and women protection advisors positions may cripple the ability of peace operations to fulfil these critical tasks.

We must also ensure that United Nations peacekeepers themselves are not part of the problem and condemn cases of sexual exploitation and abuse. We welcome recent initiatives by the Secretary-General, including the conclusion of the sexual exploitation and abuse voluntary compact with Member States, the establishment of a Circle of Leadership and the appointment of a sexual exploitation and abuse victims' rights advocate. Still much more needs to be done to tackle this scourge, ensure accountability and fundamentally reconfigure our collective approach to make it victim centred.

Unfortunately, sexual violence also remains prevalent in situations of armed conflict worldwide. The Group condemns in the strongest terms such acts, which constitute a grave violation and abuse of human rights and international humanitarian law, and raise barriers to the full achievement of gender equality, peace and development. To end impunity, perpetrators must be brought to justice, and victims and survivors must be assisted in a comprehensive manner in order to fully recover from these violations and be able to reintegrate in their societies.

We are also appalled by acts of sexual violence, including rape, child, early and forced marriage and enslavement, including those committed by terrorist groups, such as Da'esh. In this regard, we welcome the recent adoption of resolution 2379 (2017), on accountability for the acts committed by Da'esh in Iraq. It is our hope that this is the first step in a process to ensure more comprehensive accountability. We highlight the importance of including specific expertise on gender and sexual violence to ensure the documentation of sexual violence as part of these efforts, as well as a focus on reducing stigma associated with survivors of sexual violence in conflict.

Indeed, a gendered approach is critical to facing new and emerging challenges, such as violent extremism. We support the engagement of women's leadership and the incorporation of a gender lens into the development of strategies to prevent and address violent extremism, and recognize Women's Alliance for Security Leadership as a dynamic network of independent women-led organizations that are locally rooted and globally connected. Such an approach recognizes the role of women in developing resilience, the impact of violent extremism on women and the reality of women joining violent extremist groups. We also welcome the establishment of the Group of Friends of Preventing Violent Extremism, co-chaired by Jordan and Norway, which stresses the need for full participation of women and youth in efforts to prevent violent extremism.

To conclude the Group of Friends statement, we believe in the transformational potential of the women and peace and security agenda. We remain committed to working with the United Nations and all Member States for its full realization.

(*spoke in French*)

Allow me to make a few additional remarks in my national capacity.

There is no doubt that progress has been made in implementing the women and peace and security agenda, however, it has been slow and many challenges remain. We must consider doing things differently and we must challenge ourselves to move beyond incrementalism. Canada is committed to finding opportunities to create and support transformative solutions for gender equality in conflict situations. We will defend women's voices and human rights. We will challenge narratives that undermine women's ability to contribute, lead and shape solutions. We will collaborate with civil society, Member States and the United Nations to reinvigorate the implementation of this important agenda. Finally, we will continue to demonstrate our commitment to transparent and regular reporting on the progress made in the implementation of our national action plan on women and peace and security, which is currently being finalized, to ensure that we are making progress.

In the context of our feminist foreign policy, Canada is taking concrete actions to advance the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda.

(*spoke in English*)

We recognize that women are key actors in conflict prevention and resolution and peacebuilding. Peace and security is one of the cornerstones of Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy, which puts gender equality at the centre of international assistance programming. In support of this policy, Canada will dedicate $150 million over five years to support local organizations that advance women's rights in developing and fragile States. Last year, Canada also provided $1.5 million to the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, which supports women's organizations working on the front lines of conflict prevention and resolution. We strongly urge others to support this Fund to ensure that women's and girls' voices are heard.

We know that by failing to mainstream gender perspectives in peace operations, we will fail to effectively respond to the needs and interests of local women and girls. At the United Nations Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial Conference, which Canada will be pleased to host in Vancouver om November, mainstreaming gender into our discussions and reflections is of the utmost importance. We are challenging the panellists and participants to suggest and present innovative solutions to integrating gender perspectives in peacekeeping. Canada continues to demonstrate its commitment to supporting women's participation in peace operations. We are working to increase the proportion of Canadian women peacekeepers, including police officers deployed to peace operations, and have been at the forefront of a United Nations training initiative aimed at increasing the number of women police officers deployed.

Canada is also a strong advocate for the full implementation of the United Nations zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. Our Prime Minister recently joined the Secretary-General's Circle of Leadership and signed the voluntary compact on eliminating sexual exploitation and abuse. We are also providing funding to the Office of the Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and to the Trust Fund in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, and we strongly encourage all Member States to do the same.

The question of accountability resonates strongly for Canada. Under our first national action plan, Canada submitted five annual progress reports on the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in Parliament, which helped to take stock of the progress achieved and record lessons learned. The progress reports also allowed us to identify shortfalls and highlight emerging good practices, all of which have been useful in the development of the second action plan. We wish to thank civil society and national indigenous organizations, which provided invaluable input into this action plan, which will be launched shortly. We look forward to collaborating with our domestic and international partners in its implementation.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Khoshroo (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to express my gratitude to France for organizing today's debate, and thank the briefers.

The growing body of evidence shows that women's participation in peace and reconciliation processes and their implementation have contributed to increased chances of success for the sustainability of peace and security arrangements in various parts of the world. As a result of foreign intervention and military invasions, as well as foreign occupation combined with an upsurge of violent extremism and terrorism, women and girls in many parts of the Middle East are witnessing the collapse of their hopes for a better future. At the same time, sadly in many conflicts, especially in the Middle East, women have been and continue to be the primary victims of large-scale and often systemic sexual violence.

Acts committed by terrorist groups, particularly Boko Haram, Da'esh and Al-Shabaab, demonstrate the most extreme forms of such violence, which particularly targets women and children. There are thousands of confirmed cases in which sexual violence has been used as a tactic of terrorism and employed by terrorist groups in places, such as Iraq, Syria, Somalia, Nigeria and Mali, to advance their military, economic and ideological ends.

It would be naive to assume that, based on the physical disappearance of Da'esh in Iraq and Syria, its heinous activities and atrocities directed against innocent civilians, especially women and children, might cease. Indeed, they have integrated those dreadful practices into their takfiri ideology — a destructive ideology of hate an exclusion enforced through a complex system of networking throughout the world. The international community needs first and foremost to concentrate on combating such a vicious ideology and those who propagate it.

At the same time, we cannot neglect the very significant dynamic generated by interventionist policies and occupation, as well as attempts at regime change that have prepared the optimal breeding ground for terrorist and extremist groups to grow and function. Experience in our region clearly shows that, following every instance of aggression and foreign intervention, there is a vacuum resulting in instability, which is effectively exploited by those groups that have committed the most serious crimes against innocent civilians, especially women and children, who are the most vulnerable part of the fabric of society. A failed-State situation and post-aggression environment give them a free hand to organize themselves and propagate their ideology. Unfortunately, the Security Council normally does not discuss the role of those who bear the primary responsibility for such scenarios by having created the breeding ground for terrorists. For obvious reasons, it prefers to discuss the symptoms and not the causes.

Iranian women are an integral part of a vibrant Iranian society. Their outstanding role in advancing development, peace and humanitarian causes in society is incontestable. They are active participants in political life and elections as both candidates and voters. Education has been the centrepiece of our efforts to empower women and girls over the past four decades. It is therefore not surprising that the number of women who study medicine and science in Iran is now double that of men. The role of the private sector, including microenterprise and cooperatives for women's economic empowerment, has increased substantively in Iran.

It noteworthy that our national achievements are being made against the backdrop of the most hostile, unilateral and coercive sanctions against Iranians. Such inhuman and indiscriminate sanctions imposed by the United States under dubious pretexts are in flagrant violation of the basic economic and social rights of all women and girls, as well as their right to development, and undermines the constructive role that Iranian civil society and women can play therein.

I hope that this open debate will contribute to ongoing efforts to integrate the women and peace and security agenda into conflict prevention.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Czech Republic.

Mr. Komárek (Czech Republic): The Czech Republic aligns itself with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the European Union.

We would like to thank to French presidency of the Security Council for convening this open debate. We would also like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his valuable report (S/2017/861) on women and peace and security, as well as for his strong commitment to implementing the agenda in terms of women's participation in the work of the entire Organization, including its security pillar.

The Czech Republic supports the special focus of the Secretary-General on the meaningful participation of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction so as to establish sustained peace in conflict-affected countries. The Czech Republic is happy to recognize that the women and peace and security agenda has gained increased attention from the United Nations Member States since its adoption as resolution 1325 (2000) by the Security Council in 2000. The number of national action plans for implementing the women and peace and security agenda is increasing, as is the number of related projects.

On the other hand, it is a less encouraging fact that national action plans relating to the agenda have been adopted by only 68 of the 193 United Nations Member States, and that the vast majority of projects are small, short-term and underfinanced. As the global study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) concluded in 2015, one of the key obstacles to implementing the women and peace and security commitments has been the lack of financing.

The Czech Republic adopted its national action plan on women and peace and security in January 2017. The plan contains concrete, measurable tasks. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Sweden and Austria for sharing their national experiences in helping us establish the Czech national action plan. The Czech Ministry of Defence adopted its own action plan to implement resolution 1325 (2000) in 2015. Based on its successful specialized projects, the Czech Republic became the lead nation of a programme dedicated to training Jordanian female soldiers in the disposal of explosive ordnance. Gender mainstreaming belongs to the cross-cutting principles of the transition and promotion programme of the Czech Republic. The aim of the programme is to promote democratic principles in countries in transition, for example by encouraging women's participation in decision-making.

In the framework of development cooperation and humanitarian aid, the Czech Republic has implemented a number of projects totalling $6 million in 2016, with a strong focus on gender equality and/or women's empowerment, including projects aimed at preventing sexual violence and abuse of women and girls. Those projects were implemented in Georgia, Serbia, Kosovo, Syria, the Central African Republic and Afghanistan. Women, however, are still underrepresented in the decision-making positions in the Czech Republic, including in diplomatic posts. Therefore, an action plan for a balanced representation of women and men in decision-making positions for the period 2016-2018 was adopted by the Czech Government in July 2016.

The Czech Republic is supporting global gender activities, including activities in the framework of the women and peace and security agenda of UN-Women, through regular voluntary financial contributions.

Let me assure you, Madam President, that the Czech Republic remains strongly committed to the women and peace and security agenda at the national and international levels.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Mr. Hattrem (Norway): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and my own country, Norway.

While hope is growing in some regions, new crises are emerging elsewhere. Persistent and recurring suffering as a result of war calls us to action. There is fear and distress, persons are displaced, and educations and livelihoods are lost. Women's and girls' rights are targeted and their security compromised even before a conflict erupts. Experience has taught us that there is no sustainable peace without the participation of women. We will not succeed unless our approach is gender-responsive.

We welcome the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/861), but we also have concerns about the decrease in women's participation in mediation after years of steady progress, the decline in requests for and inclusion of gender expertise, and the decline in gender-sensitivity in peace agreements. Hard-won gains must be sustained. It is up to us to see that they are. A global Women, Peace and Security Index was launched yesterday. It combines data on women's inclusion, access to justice and security. It can help us target interventions more effectively. We are doing better normatively, but also in implementation. What is needed is more strategic and consistent implementation.

Overall, women have become more influential in peace processes, at the negotiating table and as part of parallel initiatives. Colombia and Syria are noteworthy, but important strides have also been made in countries like Yemen and the Philippines. We are including civil society more systematically. We commend the efforts of UN-Women, the Department for Political Affairs, and committed Special Envoys.

The question remains: Are we learning from one process to the next? Various groups of friends, including the new Group of Friends on Countering and Preventing Violent Extremism, give attention to the participation of women and the roles of young women and men. The Women Mediators Networks make it possible for those involved to share experiences. The National Focal Points Initiative is helpful. The Nordic countries have joined forces for women and peace and security. Nordic-Baltic coordinators will meet annually to improve coordination and the implementation of national action plans in our region.

However, more is required if we are to effectively learn from our successes and failures alike. The NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security provides essential information. The Global Solutions Exchange platform shares insights that we need. Yet our approach to women and peace and security is often too generic and lacks contextual analysis and points of action. The Security Council's informal group of experts is an important step in the right direction.

Gender is recognized to be about men and masculinity as well. Men can be victims of sexual violence too. That women can play a destructive role in conflict is no longer ignored, yet stereotypes persist and influence our work. The powerful leadership of women in mediation is now better understood and promoted, but women are often ignored when a process moves to the national or international level. Women human rights defenders often remain unprotected, abuses underreported, and our response inadequate.

Sexual violence is firmly on the agenda. We recognize the work of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict and her Team of Experts, and the call to action to end sexual violence in conflict. Women and men in United Nations operations are more systematically trained to be gender-responsive. Yet sexual violence remains endemic in many conflicts. We welcome the new handbook on the prevention and handling of sexual violence in conflict that is being developed for use in United Nations peace operations.

More women are being deployed as leaders as well. Major General Kristin Lund was recently appointed Head of Mission and Chief of Staff of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization in the Middle East. Women leaders are sought after. We welcome the Secretary-General's leadership and the new strategy on gender parity. However, he needs our help. Member States are nominating seven men for each woman. We have many best practices and positive developments to showcase, but far too often they remain isolated initiatives that are not followed up consistently and systematically. Our job is to ensure that best practices become mainstream practice.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Jordan.

Ms. Bahous (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to thank you and France, Madam, for your efforts during your presidency of the Security Council this month and for organizing this meeting. We wish you every success in your endeavour.

Allow me also to thank Secretary-General Guterres for his report (S/2017/861). We welcome his recommendations. We stress the importance of ensuring the full and genuine participation of women in peace and security efforts and the need to provide regular and necessary financing for the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. We also welcome the Secretary-General's strategy on gender parity.

We meet today to assess our efforts as an international community — not only our ability to solve conflicts, but also our ability to empower women effectively and increase their participation in peace negotiations, conflict prevention efforts and humanitarian relief action, as well as in the prevention of extremist ideologies and terrorism. Jordan attaches great importance to women's empowerment at all levels because they play a major role in promoting sustainable peace.

At the national level, we have achieved progress in the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. Indeed, our draft national plan has been submitted to the Cabinet and will be ratified soon, launching the effective implementation of the agenda in cooperation with civil society organizations and all governmental and military entities. We have estimated the cost of the national plan and allocated a quality, flexible and realistic budget to it. We stress the importance of capacity-building and providing financial resources and technical support. That will help provide the necessary financial resources.

Successive Jordanian Governments have attached importance to and prioritized women's rights and empowerment. They have focused on increasing women's participation in economic, social and political life. We recently achieved great progress in introducing legislative reforms and improving administrative and political frameworks to end all forms of discrimination against women and promote gender equality. The participation of women has been improved at all levels over the past decade in Jordan, rising to 15.4 per cent in the Senate and House of Representatives; 18.5 per cent in the judiciary; 35.5 per cent in political parties; 37.8 per cent in municipal councils; 21 per cent in trade unions; and 19.9 per cent in the diplomatic corps.

Despite these achievements we continue to face social and political challenges to women's empowerment and gender equality, and we continue to address these challenges. Building on that, Jordan continuously reviews its legislation to empower women and ensure their access to decision-making posts and increase their political participation in elected councils. We have also enacted rules and legislation to protect them against violence and discrimination. Most importantly, in 2007 we adopted flexible work rules that benefit all female workers and business-owners in the private sector, especially those with family responsibilities. We have also adopted a law against domestic violence to protect and rehabilitate women. Our Parliament has also deleted article 308 of the Penal Code, which granted impunity to rapists by allowing them to marry their victims.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is an opportunity to make a quantum leap in the participatory development process to include a gender perspective in all national development agendas. As the context of the *Jordan 2025* document and the Executive Development Programme 2016-2019, we adopted a set of policies to empower women in the sectors of health, education, ending poverty, social protection and employment, and on their participation in the labour force and in social and political life. We also promoted women's empowerment during the voluntary national review of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals in July in New York, especially with respect to Goal 5, on gender equality.

Recently, in New York, Jordan and Norway, with the participation of 40 States, also launched the Group of Friends on Countering and Preventing Violent Extremism. The Group focuses on the importance of empowering women and young people to fight violent extremism and promote the ability of local women to prevent conflict, respond to crises and emergencies, and build sustainable peace. It focuses on the need to link education to social and human sciences, communications and media in order to build promising generations that will work for peace. We note the major role played by Jordan in following up on the youth, peace and security agenda during our membership of the Security Council in 2014 and 2015 and the adoption of resolution 2250 (2015), on youth, peace and security.

Jordan is a pioneer at the regional and international levels. We provide international peace and security expertise by taking part in peacekeeping and deploying peacekeepers, and by participating in dialogue and mediation for peace. We also support the policy of zero tolerance of sexual exploitation and abuse. We are also increasing women's participation in police departments. Recently, we sent women police officers to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, and expect to send female peacekeepers to the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur. This highlights the great importance we attach to the contribution of women and the promotion of their roles in peacekeeping operations. We stress the need for the United Nations to move from peacekeeping to conflict prevention. We must work together to address the root causes of conflict and to prevent them. In fact, women play a major, important and effective part in that.

We are providing a variety of services to Syrian refugees. We offer basic education and health services to women and men refugees in post-conflict and crisis situations. Some 50 per cent of refugees are women and 53 per cent are young people under 18 years. We have opened schools in refugee camps and facilitated the inclusion of student refugees even when they lacked the necessary documentation. Our public schools have been working double shifts to service these students. We are also providing gender-responsive services, including psychosocial support and legal and medical services. We are facilitating secure access to these services for the most exposed and vulnerable women and girls, especially in refugee camps and host families.

With regard to human trafficking, we have launched the Al-Karama Centre, which protects victims of all nationalities. Our Government is supporting small enterprises, led by women within refugee camps and in Jordanian society. We are facilitating their work in the Jordanian labour market by giving them work permits. The Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, which was established after the 2015 high-level review of the women and peace and security agenda, is also providing vital support for Syrian women refugees. It empowers them economically, protects their rights and fights sexual violence.

I would like to the need for the international community to alleviate the suffering of Palestinian women and girls under the yoke of Israeli occupation, especially in Israeli prisons. We must provide them with all their legitimate rights, including the right to live in dignity.

Women play an effective and principal role in building peace. There can be no peace in societies without the serious and genuine participation of women. We cannot achieve the 2030 Agenda or sustainable peace without empowering women and girls, without gender equality, and without ending all forms of violence against them. We will continue to work at the national, regional and international levels to support the women and peace and security agenda to provide a better future for women and girls without delay.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mr. Giacomelli da Silva (Brazil) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I should like to thank France for organizing this debate.

I also thank the Secretary-General for his recent report (S/2017/861) on the subject, as well as his Chef de Cabinet, the Executive Director of UN-Women, the Secretary-General of the International Organization of la Francophonie and Ms. Mina-Rojas for their briefings.

Many positive steps have been taken to implement the eight resolutions on women and peace and security. Despite these efforts, however, women remain a minority in peace and security negotiations and in peacekeeping operations. The challenge is to fully implement the resolutions of the Council, including the landmark resolution 1325 (2000).

Protection and independence are inextricable dimensions of the women and peace and security agenda. At the international level, this requires women's participation and respect for their rights in the formulation and implementation of the mandates of peacekeeping operations and special political missions, in peace negotiations, in peacekeeping initiatives and in humanitarian interventions.

Complex humanitarian crises spawned by conflicts shed light on the plight of women and girls who are subject to various forms of sexual violence and forced to flee their homes and communities. They become refugees and displaced persons. In this context, we must pay particular attention to women and girls within the most vulnerable groups.

The importance of increasing the presence of women in peacekeeping operations is indisputable. It would be unthinkable to establish a peacekeeping operation without deploying gender-equality advisers, incorporating a protection of women mandate, or training Blue Helmets in the prevention of and the fight against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. We commend the Secretariat for the measures it has proposed to reach the target of 15 per cent goal for female officers among senior officers and military observers within peacekeeping operations. Brazil also wishes to thank the Secretary-General for his initiatives to promote a new, victim-centred approach to preventing and countering sexual exploitation and abuse perpetrated by those serving under the United Nations flag or a United Nations mandate.

Brazil had the honour of participating in the second meeting of the National Focal Points Network that addresses issues on women and peace and security, in addition to the recent general debate of the General Assembly. With its first national action plan, which has been in place since March, Brazil now has an important tool to measure its progress on the women and peace and security agenda.

We have already made significant progress. For instance, the Brazilian army has admitted women to its military schools, the skills development programme on women and peace and security has been integrated in the establishment of the Sergio Vieira de Mello Peacekeeping Operations Joint Center and that programme has now been incorporated into the curriculum of our School of Diplomacy. We are also striving to increase the number of female candidates for posts in Brazilian civilian and military peacekeeping operations and special political missions. We sincerely hope that the national action plan will continue to produce encouraging results and that the women and peace and security agenda will continue to flourish within the United Nations system as a whole.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to ther representative of Mexico.

Ms. Jaquez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am grateful to France for convening this important annual debate, which offers us a very good opportunity to evaluate the progress and challenges of the agenda on women and peace and security.

Mexico aligns itself with the statement made earlier by the representative of Turkey on behalf of the group made up of Mexico, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Turkey and Australia.

It has been 17 years since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), which represented indisputable progress in the way in which we understand the disproportionate consequences of armed conflicts on women and girls, as well as the way in which we conceive women's participation in the reconstruction of societies and promoting the gender dimensions of peace processes.

Today we confirm that women are a central piece in attaining sustainable peace. Women are key to preventing conflict and maintaining inclusive societies with a healthy social fabric. Women and girls, who represent more than half the world's population, have a central role to play in the prevention of conflict and building peace. Mexico fully agrees with the findings of the Secretary-General in his report (see S/2017/861). The effective and cross-cutting application of that agenda throughout the system contributes to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, preventing conflicts and achieving sustainable peace. We support the Secretary-General's commitment to integrate the gender equality component as a central part of his approach to conflict prevention, as well as the United Nations management reform initiatives.

Mexico is convinced that the international community must continue to promote a greater presence of women in peace negotiations, more female candidates for high-level positions in political and peacekeeping operations, the establishment of gender agendas for those negotiations and the design of peacebuilding processes with a gender perspective.

At the national level, Mexico supports and encourages the full participation of women in all areas of public life. There is no doubt that gender equality and the empowerment of women are necessary to achieve societies that are more peaceful, fair, equitable and inclusive. The participation and empowerment of women allows us to strengthen sustainable peace.

Through its bodies and agencies the Government of Mexico promotes equitable representation of women in all sectors and levels. The participation and the involvement of a pluralistic civil society, including feminist organizations and defenders of women's rights, are essential to guarantee the fulfilment of those commitments and advance our agenda on the progress and empowerment of women and girls.

The eight resolutions adopted by the Security Council in this area have contributed to strengthening the norms of this agenda, but the challenge lies in achieving its effective, coherent and cross-cutting application throughout the Organization's system in order to eliminate the marginalization of women that still exists in decision-making on peace and security. The Security Council must continue to promote efforts to mainstream that agenda in its work, particularly in other thematic agendas, as well as including gender and women's protection advisers in peace operations.

In line with my country's commitment to make progress in the fulfilment of this agenda, Mexico deployed, in 2016, the first four Mexican military women to United Nations peace operations. We will continue to expand the participation of female personnel in the near future. Likewise, given the escalation of violence currently occurring on the international scene — and in recognizing that crises are not neutral from the gender perspective and that armed conflicts affect particularly women and girls — Mexico joined the Secretary-General's initiative on the voluntary compact on preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse committed by United Nations personnel on the ground.

Sustainable peace has a woman's face. Let us make the necessary efforts to empower women and girls, and pay special attention to the women in those societies with deep problems in which conflicts can be unleashed. Let us invest in women and girls as essential promoters of peace and security.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Ms. Marinaki: It is an honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the European Union and its member States. I would like to express our appreciation to France, during its presidency of the Security Council, for organizing this open debate. The candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia; align themselves with this statement.

The European Union's approach is built on the foundations of human rights, peace and security, development and gender equality. In that context, promoting the agenda on women and peace and security is essential to realizing our shared global ambitions for conflict prevention, sustaining peace and sustainable development. We welcome the first report Secretary-General Guterres on women and peace and security (see S/2017/861), and we fully support his commitment to place gender at the centre of the United Nations prevention platform. A few weeks ago, the European Union and the United Nations launched the historic Spotlight Initiative. With a European Union funding commitment of €500 million, the Spotlight Initiative intends to intensify and better target the efforts of the European Union and the United Nations to eliminate violence worldwide against women and girls.

In June, the European Union took over from Sweden the leadership of the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies, a global initiative to make sure that all humanitarian actors work together to prevent and mitigate gender-based violence. Also in June, the European Union signed the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention. With that signature, we committed to further strengthen the existing legal framework and capacity to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, including domestic violence.

The European Union further highlights the resilience of our zero-tolerance policy regarding sexual exploitation and abuse. We have revised the standards of behaviour for our civilian and military missions and operations, and we support the efforts of Secretary-General Guterres in that regard. One thing that connects the Spotlight Initiative, our leadership on the Call to Action and our implementation of the agenda on women and peace and security is our firm belief that preventing sexual and gender-based violence is critical to conflict prevention. Conflict prevention is a keystone of our Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy and of our new European Consensus on Development.

The full and effective implementation of the women and peace and security agenda remains a priority for the European Union. Eighteen of our member States have already adopted a national action plan on women and peace and security, further complemented by an implementation framework at a European Union-wide level. In line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the European Union's Gender Action Plan 2016-2020, we are devoting €6.5 billion every year to external projects on development that address gender equality and women's empowerment as either a principal or a significant objective, with the aim of carrying out more than 85 per cent of those projects in the next year.

The European Union strategy for resilience-building, adopted last June, directs us to consider the gender perspective in all our activities to support partner countries in becoming more resilient to today's global challenges. We remain committed to substantially increasing women's participation in all aspects of peace and security, including women's political participation and leadership and their important role in the fight against radicalization and violent extremism.

The European Union and its member States have progressed towards better gender balance in our diplomatic services and our field missions, including in leadership positions. In our external action, we have continued to work for women's full and active participation in conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding. In Afghanistan, we have helped female members of the High Peace Council to play an active and critical role in the peace agreement implementation. We have also engaged in working alongside and supporting the Syrian Women's Advisory Board of United Nations Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura, while in Uganda we have closely engaged with the Women Situation Room, a mechanism fully operated by and for women to contain election-related violence and enable women's political participation.

Turning to mediation, the European Union continues its active involvement in mediation, facilitation and dialogue processes. Our mediation support team has been engaged in over 40 dialogues and mediation efforts worldwide. More recently, we have supported the training of Libyan women peace activists in negotiation and mediation skills.

We appreciate the important work done in the framework of the African Network of Women in Conflict Prevention and Peace Mediation and on the initiative on mediation in the Mediterranean. We have actively engaged with the Nordic Women Peace Mediators' Network and we are looking forward to closely interacting with the newly created Mediterranean Women Mediators' Network, which was launched yesterday in Rome. The European Union remains ready to contribute to better synergies and collaboration between all those networks. We fully support the United Nations network of women and peace and security focal points. We will also continue to promote the crucial role of women mediators at the grassroots level.

Let me recall the strong European Union support to the ambitious United Nations reform agenda of the Secretary-General Guterres. Promoting gender parity in the Organization, as part of the reform effort, must go hand in hand with gender analysis and the integration of a gender perspective across all activities of the United Nations.

The full participation of women and the full implementation of the women and peace and security agenda should be a guiding principle for reforming the peace and security pillar. Achieving gender equality and ensuring the recruitment, promotion and retention of women, in particular at senior levels and in United Nations operations, will be critical. That requires sustainable budgetary and human resources dedicated to women and peace and security, including the systematic recruitment and appropriate integration of gender advisers as a standard part of the senior management of all United Nations operations and teams.

Just as women and peace and security represent a global agenda, the European Union has pursued global partnerships and collaborations in that regard. Our engagement and close cooperation with civil society organizations will remain at the core of our efforts. We reaffirm our determination to further develop our strategic partnership with the United Nations and to further strengthen our close cooperation with partner countries and multilateral partners. We recently stepped up our engagement in the initiative for the acceleration of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) at the regional level.

In conclusion, the United Nations can continue to rely on the European Union as its staunchest supporter in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment around the world and in pioneering together our efforts on the women and peace and security agenda.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Namibia.

Mr. Gertze (Namibia): Namibia welcomes the Security Council's decision to once again discuss the issue of women and peace and security as a standing agenda item. We are encouraged by the overwhelming support shown by Member States as evidenced in the large number of participants.

My delegation also aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women and Peace and Security.

We would like to reiterate that Namibia, as the initiator of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, remains committed to its implementation. We look forward to a time when women's contributions to peace processes are valued and respected equally.

In Namibia, the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) falls within the national gender policy framework, which includes a cluster on gender, peacebuilding, conflict resolution and natural disaster management. Its overarching objective is to increase and strengthen women's participation in conflict resolution, promote women's contribution to peacebuilding and involve women in natural disaster management, an emerging issue that resolution 1325 (2000) overlooked. The reviewed gender policy is complemented by other national policies aimed at mainstreaming gender and holding discussions on placing women on par with men, including in the Affirmative Action Act, the Inheritance Act and the Communal Land Act, among others.

Those policies have ensured that Namibia has been deploying women to all peacekeeping missions and has had to date one of the largest female police contingents at the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, the Sudan. We also had a women police contingent in Liberia. When one of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, Lesotho, faced a political impasse last year, the SADC police contingent to that country was led by a Namibian woman who had previously served in Darfur. In addition, Namibia has seconded a woman to the Office of the African Union Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security.

It is our belief that the significant presence of women peacekeepers in conflict and post-conflict areas has an added advantage of creating safer spaces for girls and women who have suffered sexual violence. Studies conducted by the United Nations on support for resolution 1325 (2000) have demonstrated that female soldiers often face different cultural restrictions than their male counterparts and are able to gain information from women and children. That ability to gain the trust of local populations should be considered a vital component of any peacekeeping operation.

The challenges to the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) are many, and include a lack of awareness of the agenda, a lack of political will, compounded by entrenched biases not to promote women to positions of power, and a lack of capacity-building and financing for the agenda. Another challenge is simply cultural and traditional norms that serve to promote men to positions of power, while questioning the ability of women to lead, particularly in traditionally male fields such as the police, defence services and peacekeeping. Since those traditional norms are pushed by both women and men, we must encourage a culture in which both men and women believe it is vital to support the rise of women to positions of leadership.

The inclusion of women in early-warning, mediation and conflict resolution efforts are key to ensuring a successful peace and security agenda. Gender-specific provisions also need to be included in peace agreements. Much progress is still to be made in that, as in 2016 only half of peace agreements adopted contained gender-specific provisions.

We must also do more to prevent and condemn sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping operations. The role of peacekeepers is to protect civilians, not cause more harm or distress. In that regard, Namibia signed the voluntary compact against sexual exploitation and abuse, during the General Assembly high-level week in September, and we encourage others to do the same.

Namibia urges Member States to commit to nominating women for top-level positions in international and regional peace and security organizations. At the African Union, the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, Ms. Bineta Diop, has been raising this matter in many forums. We encourage other regional and subregional organizations to nominate women, peace and security envoys. We urge troop- and police-contributing countries to identify and deploy female military experts in peacekeeping missions. Finally, we demand greater consideration of the women and peace and security agenda in the working procedures of the Security Council, both country-specific and thematic.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium.

Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium) (*spoke in French*) I thank the President for organizing this open debate.

Belgium associates itself fully with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union. I would like to deliver the following remarks in my national capacity.

In July, we adopted our third national action plan regarding women and peace and security. The new plan, which covers the period of 2017 to 2021, encompasses numerous courses of action that should contribute to improving the status of women in areas of conflict, pre-conflict and post-conflict. Ensuring the implementation of such an ambitious plan during this period requires necessary follow-up. To that end, frequent consultations among the Belgian departments concerned, as well as with external actors, including civil society and local women's organizations, is critical. An annual report regarding progress achieved will be submitted to Parliament.

Incorporating the gender perspective in peace and security initiatives is among the pillars of our policy. In that regard, concrete initiatives include promoting the incorporation of the gender perspective at the Peacebuilding Commission in developing new integrated peacebuilding strategies as well as in the semi-annual reviews of strategic frameworks. As a member of the Peacebuilding Commission, we are pleased that the Commission now has at its disposal a mechanism that can better incorporate the women peace and security agenda, thanks to gender-based focal points.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2017/861) rightly mentions the importance of improving technical capacity-building in the area of gender equality as a key strategy for incorporating and bolstering gender equality in conflict prevention initiatives being carried out by the United Nations. This technical competency is also of great importance in peacekeeping operations — and all the more crucial when mandates are revised, contingent levels are reduced or when the financing of peacekeeping operations diminishes. In the event, it is critical that gender adviser posts not be affected.

A number of studies reflect the fact that women's participation heightens the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance, the credibility and quality of peacekeeping, as well as heightening the speed of economic recovery in post-conflict situations and the sustainability of peace agreements. The role of women — for example, in security sector reform — is often underestimated. A greater presence of women within reformed, mixed security forces strengthens the link between the State and citizens. It contributes to a more peaceful relationship between security forces and civilians, with the view to a lasting end to a crisis.

Women are a force for peace, and it is therefore critical for women to be able to fully play their role as political actors in the service of peace and conflict prevention. Belgium seeks to contribute to this empowerment of women, including in the realm of mediation. In that regard, here in new York next April, we will convene a seminar on the role of women in mediation in Africa, so as to identify ways so to strengthen their involvement.

To conclude, I would like to note that, as a candidate for a non-permanent seat in the Security Council, Belgium expects and hopes to continue to actively engage in the women and peace and security agenda.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

Ms. Krisnamurthi (Indonesia): First of all, I would like to thank you, Madam President, for your leadership to sustain commitment on this issue.

Indonesia aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Turkey on behalf of the group made up of Mexico, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Turkey and Australia.

We also express our deep appreciation to all the briefers for their comprehensive insights on this agenda item.

Resolution 1325 (2000) underlines the significance of women's role in our efforts to achieve peace. We have heard the countless stories of many women and girls who showed courage and determination in working against all odds to ensure that peace prevails. It would be unfortunate if their bravery and vision went unrealized. The international community has given its continuous support to the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). Nevertheless, women remain largely objects of exploitation in conflict, not to mention the fact that the complex challenges that women face in conflict and preventing conflict are compounded by social and economic inequalities, as well as environmental degradation. Those challenges certainly undermine the spirit of resolution 1325 (2000). It also means that we are still a long way from realizing a just, peaceful and prosperous world. I would like to take this opportunity to share some of Indonesia's thoughts and experiences.

First, with regard to fostering an environment for peace and stability, solutions should focus on building institutions that encourage the habit of dialogue, consensus, inclusivity, respect, integrity, the peaceful settlement of disputes and non-use of force. Only by uniting our energy — women and men, boys and girls — can we strengthen our efforts for common causes. At the same time, it is also significant to acknowledge and foster the crucial role of women and families in the prevention of conflicts that may lead to radicalism and extremism.

Secondly, we must develop an ecosystem that stimulates prosperity. Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, which is a comprehensive and integrated blueprint to synergize development with peace, enabling women to participate in peacebuilding through the economy.

Thirdly, we must foster cooperation to develop and strengthen the ecosystem for peace, stability and prosperity. To that end, it is important that we have a strong global institution, namely, the United Nations, along with peacebuilding and peacekeeping mechanisms, which should continuously be strengthened.

Indonesia stands ready to mediate conflicts and to contribute to peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Currently we have nearly 3,000 troops on the ground in nine peacekeeping missions. By 2019, we aim to have 4,000 troops, with an increased number of female peacekeepers.

As part of our commitment to advancing the 2030 Agenda, Indonesia has also been sharing our best practices and experiences in empowering women in leadership through South-South and triangular cooperation. More than 2,000 participants from least developed and developing countries have benefited from the programme. At the same time, we continue to underscore the importance of meeting the international commitments under the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goals.

To conclude, I would like to reconfirm our commitment to working with all Member States as a true partner for world peace, a partner in advancing strong institutions, linking peace and development as well as strengthening cooperation as vital elements that we believe will deter the forces that devalue human life, including the lives of women.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Spain.

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in French*): Madam President, I wish to thank you for having convened this debate.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

Again, in my native language, I express my thanks to you, Madam.

When Spain was on the Security Council for two years, one of our major priorities was the women and peace and security agenda. However, now that we are no longer on the Security Council, I can state with assurance that one of Spain's highest priorities during the seventy-second and later sessions of the General Assembly will continue to be the women and peace and security agenda.

I believe that in order to make progress on this agenda and ensure its proper implementation, three things are necessary.

The first is leadership, the leadership of those around this table, the leadership of members of the General Assembly, and the leadership of our capitals.

Secondly, we need to strengthen the institutional architecture. This is something on which we are currently working in the United Nations, but we are very far from having reached our goal.

Thirdly, we need to move from the general to the specific by adopting national plans for the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. Spain has already adopted its second one.

I will now make four specific proposals that I have discussed with my very effective adviser, Victoria Ortega Gutiérrez, who is sitting behind me, who has been the very soul of Spain's work, so to speak, on this agenda item.

The first proposal touches on an issue that makes me the proudest of our tenure on the Council: the creation of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, established under resolution 2242 (2015). The Group, which meets on a near-monthly basis and which is currently being presided over, in an outstanding manner, by Uruguay and Sweden, receives a tremendous amount of information from all peacekeeping operations. What I propose we do is that we rise to the challenge of moving from simple information-gathering to a process in which the members of the Council can translate what they have heard into specific actions aimed at making progress on this agenda.

The second proposal refers to the debates held here, in the Security Council Chamber. Spain, when it was a member of the Council, had suggested that in debates on country-specific situations, in that case on Liberia, civil society be invited to address issues related to women and peace and security. We were able to achieve this, even though there was some resistance. I think that Sweden has taken up that baton. I wish to propose to the members of the Council that with respect to the participation of civil society in Security Council debates on a given country, members of civil society, when advisable because of circumstances, should be invited to describe the situation on the ground.

The third proposal relates to sanctions. The Security Council has a large number of sanctions committees, over which which I was fortunate enough to preside. Those committees have so-called listing criteria. I believe that today, at a time when, unfortunately, violence in conflict is one of the major evils besetting humankind, a truly shameful one, we should consider making the perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict the potential subject of sanctions by the relevant committees. This would represent an important advance.

The fourth proposal relates to the Women, Peace and Security Focal Points Network. I do not know if members will recall that it held its first meeting in Alicante, Spain, in which I had the good fortune to be able to participate along with a large number of delegations and high-level Secretariat staff. The second round was held recently in September, organized by Germany, Namibia and Spain. It really was very successful.

I shall now make two concrete proposals in this respect.

First, Germany has offered to host it in 2018, and Namibia in 2019. This covers some parts of the world, but I would really like a Latin American country to put forward its candidature to host the meeting in 2021, or perhaps an Asian country. I think it is important to ensure predictability in the holding of these important meetings.

The second proposal relates to the fact that the Network currently has 63 friends. It seems to me that given the importance of the women and peace and security agenda in the United Nations, 63 is a relatively low number. It is true that we began only in 2015, but I believe that we need to set slightly more aggressive benchmarks. I would be pleased if these 63 focal points increased to 80 in Germany. Let us break the barrier of 100 in Namibia, and let us after that achieve numbers that represent near-universality in terms of the Members of the United Nations.

I would say by way of conclusion that we are all following attentively the very complex process of United Nations reform, which I acknowledge can be difficult. My fear is that this reform process will affect the three fundamental pillars and that the women and peace and security agenda will not have the place it should in the new United Nations structure. All committed States must work to ensure that the remaining States and the Secretariat clearly understand the need to create a robust institutional architecture in the Organization so that we can continue making progress on this front.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Slovakia.

Mr. Mlynár (Slovakia): My delegation fully associates itself with the statement delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union.

We wish to thank you, Madam President, as well as France for taking the leadership in organizing this annual debate on women and peace and security. It is indeed crucial that the Security Council continue to systematically and consistently advance a holistic women and peace and security agenda in its work and decision-making, and we certainly do not take it for granted that 17 years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), we still have points to focus on. Indeed, we need to redouble our efforts to ensure that the resolution and our work really matter and that it is implemented in a manner that makes a difference for the people on the ground. I would like to thank the Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General, Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, for her briefing, and the other briefers for their very insightful, very practical and extremely interesting contributions to today's debate. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the significance of UN-Women and the importance that this entity plays in making sure that there is stronger engagement with the Member States, and with the Security Council in particular.

Furthermore, we would like to commend the Secretary-General for his report (S/2017/861), but, more important, for his strong commitment and leadership related not only to the issue of gender parity but also specifically to the women and peace and security agenda, pursuant to the recommendations and commitments made at the 2015 high-level review, in the global study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and in resolution 2242 (2015). We welcome and strongly support the Secretary-General's vision of peace and security grounded in long-term conflict prevention, inclusivity and gender equality, as well as his victim-centred approach to preventing sexual exploitation and abuse. I would add that we were very happy to see that the Secretary-General decided to spend United Nations Day with people on the ground, in particular in the Central African Republic, where these issues are perhaps more important than in other parts of the world. That focus is certainly very much appreciated.

I would like to welcome the practical innovations at the level of the Security Council, such as the convening of experts in the Informal Expert Group and the inclusion of women civil-society representatives in country-specific briefings. At the margins of the general debate of the General Assembly, new initiatives on gender parity and conflict prevention were launched in which my country also participated. The second meeting of the Women, Peace and Security National Focal Points Network took place in September with an important focus on conflict prevention, the security sector and its integration in national action plans and national strategies on women, peace and security. Also, the heads of the armed forces of approximately 100 Member States met at the United Nations this year to discuss the issue of increasing the number of female peacekeepers and integrating the gender perspective.

As the French delegation stated in its concept note (S/2017/889, annex), despite the substantial efforts undertaken to implement the women and peace and security agenda and the progress that has been made in the past 17 years, critical challenges remain, ranging from increasing the number of women at the highest levels of decision-making to ending impunity for gender-based violence. Moreover, gender-responsive and protective environments for women remain lacking, and women, peace and security efforts continue to be unpredictably undervalued and underfunded. These are areas where we believe we need to further enhance our concerted efforts.

We are of the view that four of the themes of the women and peace and security agenda — participation, conflict prevention, protection, and relief and recovery — need accelerated attention and action by the United Nations and its Member States. I should also like to highlight other critical areas, such as disarmament, efforts to create greater space for women's civil-society organizations and the need for stronger information and analyses on women, peace and security. The current refugee challenges create specific environments for women, and further action is necessary to address women's lives in those conditions. Last but not least, it is of the utmost importance that we collectively make progress on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDGs 5 and 16, while recognizing gender equality and peaceful, just and inclusive societies as global development priorities.

Slovakia is currently in the process of drawing up its national action plan on women, peace and security. Meanwhile, the Government continues to promote all national efforts aimed at strengthening the role of women in society through the national gender-equality strategy for the period 2014-2019 and the gender-equality action plan. In addition, the Ministry of Defence has approved its own gender-equality plan, with its implementation under the responsibility of the general staff of the armed forces and with sustained, allocated funding.

As one of the Chairs of the Group of Friends of Security Sector Reform (SSR), Slovakia wishes to re-emphasize that this particular aspect — security-sector reform — is essential to post-conflict peacebuilding and to creating the conditions needed for reconstruction and development. At present, the United Nations supports a rapidly expanding range of field missions aimed at assisting national and regional efforts in SSR, particularly at the sector-wide level.

Resolution 2151 (2014), on security-sector reform, underscored the importance of women's equal and effective participation and full involvement in all stages of the security-sector reform process. I wish to stress that gender-sensitive security-sector reform is key to developing security-sector institutions that are non-discriminatory, representative of the population and capable of effectively responding to the specific security needs of diverse groups. A United Nations approach to SSR must be gender-sensitive throughout its planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases.

Security-sector reform must also include the reform of recruitment processes and improvement in the delivery of security services so as to address and prevent sexual and gender-based violence. There is a need for sharper focus on developing gender-sensitive SSR strategies and achieving tangible results in the field. With that aim in mind, my country is planning to host a workshop in New York in early 2018 specifically dedicated to the issue of gender in relation to the SSR strategies.

In conclusion, the United Nations is facing unprecedented challenges to global peace and security. Civilians, most of all women and girls, are paying the highest price in the face of systematic violence and oppression. We all need to redouble our efforts to deliver changes on the ground in favour of women and girls, in particular in societies in conflict-affected areas.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Peru.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank the French presidency of the Security Council for convening today's open debate, which is highlighting the responsibility that States have in ensuring the full and meaningful participation and leadership of women in all efforts to maintain peace and security, including those to prevent conflicts.

The Security Council has adopted eight resolutions on the subject since 2000. Despite the progress and good practices that have been developed in the past 17 years, there are still barriers to the effective implementation of this agenda. Peru is convinced that the participation of women is essential for the resolution of conflicts and the maintenance of peace and for peacebuilding, since they offer different perspectives that enrich peace negotiations. As the Secretary-General has pointed out in his latest report on this subject (S/2017/861), improving women's access to meaningful leadership and their participation in peace efforts begins with active collaboration with civil-society organizations, especially organizations run by women.

Accordingly, we are pleased to see the trend of systematically incorporating a gender perspective in the mandates of peacekeeping operations, as well as the incorporation of women as actors in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, and the importance of providing specialized training on the protection, special needs and human rights of women and girls in situations of conflict. That is why my country has been increasing the participation of female personnel in each of the six peace missions to which we contribute.

Peru has also carried out other measures to implement the women and peace and security agenda, such as the creation of a registry of displaced persons, which has allowed for the adoption of measures to protect the rights of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations.

Similarly, in 2005, a comprehensive reparations programme for victims of violence that occurred between 1980 and 2000 was established. The Ministry for Defence has also created an internal committee for gender equality, with the objective of coordinating, articulating and overseeing the incorporation of the gender perspective into policies and institutional management of the defence sector, including the peacekeeping missions in which Peru participates.

Peru strongly believes that the women and peace and security agenda should be a central element of the process to reform United Nations peacekeeping operations, and we will work hard to make that possible. As a non-permanent member of the Security Council as of 2018, we commit to making further progress in gender equality in peacekeeping operations, and in all areas related to that agenda, especially through our participation in the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, which we will co-Chair with Sweden as of 2018.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Argentina.

Mr. García Moritán (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to thank France for convening this open debate on women and peace and security, on the occasion of the seventeenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), which Argentina supported as a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 2000.

Argentina aligns itself with the statement made by the delegation of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends on Women and Peace and Security.

I would also especially like to welcome the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/861), which shares with Member States his views on the central role of women in conflict prevention and sets out his commitments to implementing the women and peace and security agenda. Argentina shares and supports the Secretary-General's vision for reforming the Organization with a coordinated, robust and holistic approach to prevention that is based on gender equality. From the beginning, Argentina has embraced the new emphasis given by the Secretary-General to conflict prevention and the development of the concept of sustainable peace, or upholding peace, a narrative in which women and young people play a fundamental role.

In that regard, we would like to emphasize that achieving sustainable peace will be facilitated by increasing the participation of women as stakeholders in all stages of the peace process, in particular as military, police and civilian personnel in the Organization's peacekeeping operations. As has been said, this is not solely a matter of equity, but also of effectiveness in fulfilling the mandates of those missions.

In that context, we underscore the fact that Argentina has reached the United Nations goal of 15 per cent participation of women as military observers and officials in peace operations, and is therefore above the general average. We will continue working to deepen that commitment through the implementation of the national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions, which is as an overarching instrument of all national bodies regarding the issue of women and peace and security.

The strength of resolution 1325 (2000) has been acknowledging the important role that women play as key actors in peace processes. The inclusion of women must remain our priority in defining the mandates of peacekeeping operations and special political missions, as well as Security Council peacebuilding efforts, by integrating specialists in gender issues, gender violence and sexual violence in the various Security Council missions and mediation teams. In addition, we consider it crucial that specific provisions and gender commitments be included in peace and ceasefire agreements.

Argentina welcomes the highly appropriate proposal of the Secretary-General to strengthen the mediation and good offices agenda of his Office, using a gender perspective to reach solutions. Argentina therefore also supports his recommendation to create and strengthen national and regional networks of female mediators.

Argentina strongly believes that more equitable and egalitarian societies that respect the rights of women are more peaceful societies. For that reason, and to conclude, I would like to reiterate Argentina's continued support for various mechanisms and platforms that contribute to complying with the commitments assumed in the framework of the revision of resolution 1325 (2000), particularly the Justice Rapid Response initiative, the Women and Peace and Security National Focal Points Network and the promotion of the Oslo Safe Schools Declaration.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

Mr. Hilale (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): First of all, my delegation would like to thank France for organizing this open debate during its presidency of the Security Council, on an issue that is of the utmost importance to Morocco — women and peace and security.

The historic adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) represented international recognition of the role played by women in peace and security, not only as victims but also as agents of change and essential players in restoring, maintaining and consolidating peace. Maintaining peace and security requires the integration of the gender perspective into all peace efforts, in accordance with the provisions of resolution 1325 (2000) and the other resolutions that followed in that regard.

Women's participation in negotiation processes increases the chances of settling conflicts and sustaining peace. That finding was confirmed by a UN-Women-led global study in 2015, which revealed that the presence of women in peace negotiations promoted the sustainability of peace agreements, and that 35 per cent of agreements negotiated by women lasted more than 15 years. That means that the presence of women in peace negotiations is a great help for the sustainability of peace agreements.

On 7 September, 2016, Morocco organized an international conference on the topic of women and peace and security. It contributed to the international debate on the role of women in peace processes and the implementation of national plans of action to promote collective action on implementing resolution 1325 (2000). It was an occasion to reaffirm the international community's consensus on the need to strengthen women's participation in negotiations and agreements concerning the settlement of conflicts and peacebuilding, as well as to renew the United Nations commitment to the issue of the inclusion of women and gender equality in all peacebuilding and conflict-prevention strategies.

During the conference, debates focused on three areas: the role of women in mediation and conflict-prevention processes, the role of women in deradicalization and the lessons learned and best practices in the prevention of sexual violence in conflict. At the conference, my country announced the creation in Rabat of an independent regional centre, a think-tank, dedicated to studying the role of women in peacekeeping operations and their contribution to the achievement of sustainable development. The centre could serve as a space for reflection, a think-tank and a source of independent thought regarding the role and place of women in peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations in conflict zones. It is in keeping with the priorities of the Security Council in promoting women's empowerment and gender equality in the establishment of peace and international security, the dissemination of the culture of peace, ensuring access to justice and the protection of civil rights.

Women and girls have special needs in the post-conflict period, such as health services, livelihood, land rights and property rights and employment. They must also participate in decision-making and the development of national strategies for post-conflict economic recovery. Unfortunately, women are often underrepresented in the decision-making process associated with economic recovery and public governance in the post-conflict phase. They are not included in formal decision-making structures, including key economic sectors, such as infrastructure, extractive industries and commercial agriculture. To that end, the preparation of an approach based on gender and development in a post-conflict context is imperative in order to ensure that, from the beginning of the reconstruction process, there is sustainable and equitable development where both women and men share resources, opportunities, decision-making and power.

In that context, the Kingdom of Morocco takes this opportunity to commend the work of UN-Women to promote the implementation of the Security Council resolutions on women and peace and security, particularly with regard to economic recovery and reconstruction through the three areas of intervention: post-conflict planning, economic recovery and governance restoration.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has placed great emphasis on peace, including the prevention of conflict and the elimination of its root causes through Sustainable Development Goal 16, which seeks to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

The universal 2030 Agenda, which advocates a cross-cutting incorporation of gender in all Sustainable Development Goals, emphasizes the need to redouble efforts to prevent conflict and help countries emerging from conflict, while ensuring that women are involved in peacekeeping and reconstruction. In that sense, the Goals demonstrate that gender, peace, security and development are interconnected, interrelated and inseparable from one another.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Switzerland.

Mrs. Baumann (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Madam, for convening this important debate on women and peace and security. This is an important opportunity to remind the international community of the reasons why resolution 1325 (2000) and its follow-up resolutions matter significantly for international peace and security. And it further shows why Member States need to pursue their efforts to implement the provisions of those resolutions. Resolution 1325 (2000) has become the main reference for addressing women's rights and gender equality in conflict and fragility. Its adoption in 2000 was emblematic of a shift from national to human and people's security.

Human security, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls represent cornerstones of Swiss foreign policy. The Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs recently launched its first comprehensive strategy on gender equality and women's rights, which highlights the agenda on women and peace and security as one if its main pillars. The reasons for that are obvious.

First, gender equality is key for the prevention of conflict and violence, including violent extremism. There is a connection between gender equality and the readiness of a society to take up arms. Secondly, respecting women's equal rights and ensuring their inclusion in peace processes are simply a must. Women and men negotiate equally well, but there are still numerous obstacles that women face in trying to be accepted. And let us remember here that the participation of women in peace processes is not only about a seat at the negotiation table, but also about the ability and power to bring ideas and concerns to the negotiation agenda. In that connection, Switzerland commends the Secretary-General's strategy on gender equality and his call for nominating more women as special envoys, mediators and mediation experts.

Switzerland further commends General Assembly resolution 70/304, on the role of mediation, which calls upon Member States to promote the equal, full and effective participation of women in all forums and at all levels of the peaceful settlement of disputes and conflict prevention and resolution. We have learned an important lesson: we need to engage with civil society, build capacities and empower women from early on. We need to work on creating a pool of women who are ready to get on board when time arrives, both as mediators and negotiators. Switzerland therefore insists that women must be included in all mediation training and activities. We also promote local women's networks that are active in peace and security.

Thirdly, the agenda on women and peace and security contributes to better results for sustainable peace, which requires an integrated approach based on coherence between political and security measures, development and human rights agendas. Switzerland therefore promotes the connection between resolution 1325 (2000) and women's rights frameworks, which makes it possible to leverage existing United Nations and treaty bodies and their reporting mechanisms, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the universal periodic review and special mandates. That will strengthen accountability for all actors, including Governments, and prevent the fragmentation of the gender equality and women's rights agenda. In that spirit, Switzerland supports an initiative that focusses on the implementation of general recommendation No. 30 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which deals with women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations.

To conclude, let me mention two aspects that Switzerland deems crucial for the further implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), namely, the engagement of men and boys in women's economic empowerment. The agenda on women and peace and security should not focus on women alone. The transformation of power relations in societies must be at its heart. Engaging men and boys, who may be allies, victims and potential perpetrators, in all transformative actions is crucial for any conflict and violence prevention strategy and will benefit both women and men.

Finally, women's economic empowerment must receive greater attention in post-conflict recovery and State-building. Women's access to resources, income and economic independence are important enabling factors in efforts to enhance women's active participation in matters of peace and security, which ultimately leads to a safer world.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of the Holy See to the United Nations.

Ms. Fata (Holy See): The Holy See thanks the French presidency for convening this important open debate.

The adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) represented and continues to represent an important step in ensuring that women play their rightful role and have their voices heard in the areas of peace and security. While many positive steps have been taken to implement the eight Council resolutions on women and peace and security, women remain a small minority in peace and security mediation efforts and in peacebuilding operations. This open debate should serve to highlight that fact and find new ways to advance the implementation of the Council resolutions on the subject.

The experience of the Catholic Church in conflict prevention and resolution, peacemaking and peacebuilding at the grassroots level during the more than five decades of violent conflict in Colombia and today in the implementation of the peace accord on the ground has amply demonstrated that women have been, and are, key peacemakers. They disarm the violent with their multiple capacities to comprehend and empathize, dissuade, convince and forgive and rebuild lives, families and entire communities. Pastora

Mira Garcia, who lost her father, husband and two children during the civil war, is an icon for women peacemakers. She represented and spoke for all the victims in Colombia's 52-year armed conflict during the meeting on 8 September with Pope Francis and the victims of the conflict in Villavicencio. She teaches us that forgiveness is the balm of healing.

Sadly, however, most of today's conflicts show that women are all too often targets and victims, rather than peacemakers and peacebuilders. Women and girls suffer the impact of violent conflicts disproportionately. The most heinous aspect of such violence is the fact that they are specifically targeted as objects of violence and abuse, as a strategy of war. They are treated as pawns of war, rather than instruments of peace. Violent extremists and terrorists have used, and continue to use, sexual violence as a terror tactic. Acts of violence against women and girls are perpetuated not only in conflict situations. Women and girls also constitute, for instance, the great majority of the victims of trafficking in persons.

The States Members of the United Nations have a fundamental responsibility to prosecute the perpetrators of human rights abuses, war crimes and crimes against humanity, including those related to sexual violence against women and girls. Parties to conflict should respect their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Access to education in crisis situations is vital for the empowerment of women and girls. Through its institutions and agencies around the world, the Catholic Church provides assistance and support, education and skills training to thousands of women and girls who are the survivors of sexual violence in conflict situations. The courageous men and women who run those institutions sacrifice themselves daily, and many of them have paid dearly for their endeavours. Locally rooted, those institutions are able to respond rapidly and effectively so as to address on the ground the consequences of violence in armed conflict. Internationally networked, they are active advocates in national and international forums, where policies are shaped and decisions are taken.

The Holy See and the Catholic Church will continue to engage women in their efforts aimed at conflict prevention and resolution, peacemaking and peacebuilding in many parts of the world, not only as a matter of principle, but also because the lessons learned and best practices verified in those fields clearly show that women are, indeed, effective agents for the achievement and maintenance of peace and security for all.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the Senior Adviser on Gender Issues of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Ms. Darisuren: It is a great honour for me to be here representing the Secretary General of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). I commend the focus of this year's debate on moving the women and peace and security agenda towards a systematic implementation leading to tangible results. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe is the largest regional security organization under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. With our comprehensive approach to security, the women and peace and security agenda is a common thread throughout all our work, not only in the political and military fields, but also in economic and environmental issues, and in the promotion of human rights and democratic institutions.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe is active in all phases of conflict, from prevention to conflict resolution, post-conflict rehabilitation and peacebuilding. The inclusion of a gender perspective is essential in all those phases. The OSCE approach aligns closely with the goals set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We support our participating States in fulfilling their gender-equality commitments and in enhancing comprehensive security. We recognize that formal political processes provide, unfortunately, little access and space for women.

There is a clear need to increase the meaningful inclusion of women in all phases of the conflict cycle, so that we give more recognition to the central contribution of women, in particular at the grassroots level. For example, the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine makes sure, in its monitoring work, that the experiences of women and men from the conflict-affected populations are heard and are making their way into the daily public reports. We need to further invest in improving the gender balance among our monitors in order to ensure mixed patrols that reach out more effectively to the local population.

Allow me to share with the Council some examples of progress achieved over the past year by the OSCE. A total of 31 countries members of OSCE have adopted national action plans on resolution 1325 (2000), an increase of three since last year. OSCE continues to build the capacity of participating States to develop and implement their national action plans, by exchanging experiences and by providing targeted support at the national level. Just last week, the OSCE secretariat conducted the second National Action Plan Academy for five countries, and there are several more in the pipeline.

We welcome the development and implementation of localized action plans at the subnational level in Ukraine. We will be supporting that initiative, which presents a unique opportunity and potentially good practice. OSCE field operations, institutions and our secretariat work to build women's leadership at the national and local levels, through mentoring and supporting their networks and capacity development. For example, the Border Management Staff College in Dushanbe offers specialized training for women border guards.

We continue to work on gender-inclusive mediation processes. In April this year, we organized a high-level mediation retreat with heads of mission and special representatives. Building on that meeting, OSCE is preparing an analysis of our OSCE-led mediation processes and practical guidance.

OSCE political-military bodies, such as the Forum for Security Cooperation and the Security Committee, increasingly incorporate gender perspectives in their agendas, and the High-level Planning Group has mainstreamed gender in its work plans. The OSCE has been at the forefront in ensuring that a gender perspective is included in its efforts to prevent violent extremism and radicalization, which may lead to terrorism. The new Leaders against Intolerance and Violent Extremism project specifically includes women community leaders and young women and men. Strong leadership is essential if we are to achieve progress. We have therefore introduced the executive gender-coaching programme for the Secretary General and secretariat Directors so as to provide them with the necessary skills and tools to mainstream gender into their work.

Within our organizations, we recognize that more efforts are needed to implement a sustained and systematic approach aimed at improving women's participation in peace processes and at preventing and effectively responding to conflict. The OSCE will continue building stronger synergies and linkages and participating in key initiatives, such as the Woman, Peace and Security National Focal Points Network and the regional acceleration initiative. We look forward to developing even closer partnerships with the United Nations and other organizations.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to representative of Qatar.

Ms. Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank the French presidency of the Security Council for convening today's important debate.

I would also like to thank Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Charo Mina-Rojas, member of the Non-Governmental Organizations Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, and Ms. Michaëlle Jean, Secretary-General of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, for their briefings.

The adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) was indeed a turning point in our approach to the issue of women and their role in the maintenance of peace and security. The international community has recognized the serious impact of conflict on the lives of women. It has also acknowledged the importance of including women in conflict prevention and in post-conflict mediation. The Council addresses this issue quite often. The regular holding of debates on the role of women in the area of peace and security is proof that we are on the right path towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

It is unfortunate to see that women and girls are the primary victims of violent conflicts around the world. Women pay a high price in such conflicts as a result of the fact that State representatives, Governments and the parties to conflict do not respect international law. That is why we must continue to consider the role women play in order to prevent such situations. We also need a long-term strategy aimed at empowering women and at putting an end to the human rights violations of which women and girls are victims.

In that framework, it is important that we facilitate women's access to transitional justice mechanisms, which seek, in particular, to combat crimes that take place in conflicts and in transitional situations. We therefore also attach due importance and interest to the role of women in combating radicalism, which very often leads to terrorism. Women can contribute to creating an atmosphere that is beneficial for fighting such phenomena, in particular so as to protect children.

That is why Qatar has been undertaking initiatives at the national and international levels aimed at strengthening peace and security in our societies. Furthermore, and within the framework of our policy to achieve peace worldwide, we aim to contribute to an international study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). That is part of the State of Qatar's efforts to implement its national 2030 vision, which we seek to do at the national, regional and international levels. We are attempting to integrate work on the women and peace and security agenda in all of our development and humanitarian programmes. We are doing that in a number of different regions around the world. Moreover, the international community has time and again hailed those efforts.

Women's participation in decision-making within the United Nations is an extremely important element. It allows us to implement resolution 1325 (2000), and it is the reason why we pay particular attention to that aspect. We are an active member of the Group of Friends of Gender Equality within the United Nations, and we support various programmes and activities aimed at ensuring that an increasing number of women occupy important posts within the United Nations.

I would therefore like to thank the Secretary-General for his efforts to achieve gender equality within the Organization and to end gender-based violence — and to do so not only within the Organization but worldwide. That is one of the flagship measures of his administration, and I hope we will be able to implement it by 2028.

Finally, the State of Qatar remains committed to strengthening women's participation in international peace and security. It supports the various measures to promote an atmosphere that protects women and allows them to contribute to conflict resolution and to post-conflict efforts.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Lithuania.

Ms. Plepytė (Lithuania): I have the honour to address the Security Council on behalf of Estonia, Latvia and my own country, Lithuania. Our delegations also align themselves with the statement made earlier on behalf of the European Union. At the outset, we commend the French delegation for convening this open debate. We also thank the briefers for their remarks and steadfast commitment to this important issue.

The empowerment of women, their inclusive engagement, the promotion of gender equality and the mainstreaming of human rights are fundamental for sustaining peace. We commend the Secretary-General for his dedication to further advancing the women and peace and security agenda. Keeping in mind the broad scope and cross-cutting nature of that agenda, allow me to focus on priority aspects for the Baltic countries.

The critical role of women in negotiating, peacekeeping and peacebuilding is often overlooked. The Baltic countries emphasize the need for the full and effective participation of women at all stages and all levels of conflict prevention and resolution as well as peacebuilding. However, 17 years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), far too few women around the world act as mediators or are engaged in a decision-making. It is not only a question of equality. Peace negotiations and agreements set the structure and direction for post-conflict reconstruction and overall policies that affect the lives of all women and society as a whole.

We strongly advocate for the gender perspective to be fully integrated into all aspects of peace operations. Increased numbers of women peacekeepers and the deployment of women's protection and gender advisers, as well as human rights and gender-awareness training, have all proven successful and should be further expanded. In the course of this past year, the Baltic countries significantly stepped up their contribution to United Nations peace operations. We are striving to deploy more gender-balanced peacekeeping troops, and we continuously encourage female military and police personnel to apply.

Training is crucial to raising awareness and improving the implementation of gender aspects in peace operations. Before their deployment, Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian peacekeepers undergo high-quality training on human rights and gender-related issues, including the eradication of sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence. That training has moved well beyond abstract concepts towards more hands-on, scenario-based learning, to which those working on the ground can relate.

In that regard, the Baltic countries strongly support the Secretary's-General efforts to bring sexual exploitation to an end. Therefore, we signed the Secretary-General's voluntary compact on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse, and the Presidents of Estonia and Lithuania have joined the Circle of Leadership on the prevention and response to sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations operations.

The scale and complexity of the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda requires coherent and comprehensive efforts. The central role of civil society, including women's organizations, should be fully recognized. We are pleased that women civil-society representatives now regularly brief the Security Council during country-specific meetings. That useful practice should be continued.

Last but not least, a gender-responsive legal and judicial system constitutes, as is emphasized in the Secretary's-General report (S/2017/861), one of the building blocks of a resilient society. However, access to justice still faces structural inequalities. In the absence of credible judicial and security systems, the perpetrators of crimes against women and girls will pursue their malfeasance. The Baltic countries remain committed to securing accountability for sexual and gender-based violence through national and international mechanisms. It is equally important to ensure that victims receive genuine compensation for the harm they have suffered. In that regard, the International Criminal Court continues to be an important mechanism for combating sexual and gender-based violence in conflict, and should be used vigorously to pursue accountability.

In conclusion, we would like to emphasize that gender equality and resilience to conflicts and their prevention are closely interlinked. We therefore fully support the Secretary-General's profound commitment to shifting the focus of all United Nations activities towards a holistic approach to prevention, including through the advancement of the women and peace and security agenda.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Ms. Shilo (Israel): The full participation of women in every field is vital. From the chambers of Government to the boardrooms of businesses, women leaders play important roles in society. That extends to achieving peace and security, where women must be present in conflict prevention, peacekeeping, humanitarian response, conflict resolution, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction.

That is not for the benefit of women alone, but for our collective benefit. The data prove it. The Secretary-General's 2015 global study concluded that peace agreements are 35 per cent more likely to last more than 15 years if their processes include women. We cannot ignore such statistics. Today, we are here to share ideas on the crucial and unique role that women play in promoting and maintaining a safer and more peaceful world.

The landmark resolution 1325 (2000) reaffirms the important role played by women in the promotion of peace and security. Allow me to highlight some examples where women have made a significant difference.

First, in Colombia, the Government heeded the calls of its women and established a gender subcommittee during peace negotiations with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. The result was that women gained a third of the seats at the negotiating table.

Secondly, in Liberia, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's election gave women a seat at the head of the table. As Liberia's first woman president, President Johnson-Sirleaf passed ground-breaking women's rights legislation. She, along with two Liberian peace activists, received the Noble Peace Prize in 2011 for their outstanding advocacy for women in peacebuilding.

Thirdly, over the past decade, India sent nine rotations of all-women peacekeeping units to Liberia. Inspired by the self-defence training that they received from the all-women peacekeeping units, Liberian women joined their country's security forces in record numbers.

Today, despite the recruitment efforts, women still comprise only 22 per cent of United Nations peacekeeping staff and 4 per cent of military staff. We must create an environment for women peacekeepers in which they feel safe and comfortable in joining peacekeeping efforts. We should establish and implement a zero-tolerance policy on sexual harassment within peacekeeping missions, so that women will feel safe serving in the field. Preventing and eliminating sexual harassment in the workplace must be a priority. In that vein, during the most recent session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Israel introduced the first-ever United Nations resolution adopted by consensus on the prevention and elimination of sexual harassment in the workplace.

Israel is committed to the promotion and protection of the human rights of all women and girls. We were the first country in the world to implement parts of resolution 1325 (2000) in our national legislation. Amendment 4 to the Women's Equal Rights Law requires the Government to include women from all parts of society in all national policy-making committees. Additionally, over the past decade, the Israeli Parliament has passed over 50 laws and amendments to further gender equality. Nevertheless, like most countries, much work remains to be done.

Women's voices and women's leadership are fundamental to peace and security. Women's participation in peace and security is a global issue that must be met with global efforts. Let us build on each country's experiences. Let examples of local implementation inspire global implementation, and let us continue together on an upward path.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

Mr. Matjila (South Africa): My delegation wishes to express its appreciation to the Chef de Cabinet for the Secretary-General, Ms. Viotti, for her statement and for the annual report on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) (S/2017/861). We also welcome the insightful contributions that were made by Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN-Women, as well as by Ms. Charo Mina-Rojas, representative of civil society, and Ms. Michaëlle Jean, Secretary-General of the International Organization of la Francophonie.

The year 2017 will mark the seventeenth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), which formally acknowledged the changing nature of warfare, in which civilians are increasingly being targeted and women continue to be excluded from participation in peace processes. The resolution remains a significant milestone in the progress towards women's full enjoyment of their rights and equality throughout the world, a world in which for the first time women are given a significant and necessary voice in the field of peace and security.

Despite that honourable objective, much more needs to be, and must be, done. Women remain excluded within peace processes, including in the drafting of peace agreements, and their involvement in United Nations peacekeeping within the military, police and civilian components is limited. In addition, the contribution of women and girls to the peacebuilding process remains undervalued and underresourced, leaving a vital tool regarding transformative change and sustainable peace underutilized.

South Africa is committed to contributing to the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). My country's history illustrates the relevance of the role that women play in achieving and maintaining peace and security in a post-conflict environment. South Africa's women have been at the forefront of efforts to drive reform and to develop and advance responsible policies and legislation aimed at advancing the role of women in society. Today, at the level of political decision-makers, 42 per cent of South Africa's representatives in Parliament and 41 per cent of the national cabinet are women. That illustrates the progress that is being made towards a 50-50 representation in both houses of Parliament and the cabinet. Furthermore, both the speaker of the national Parliament and that of the house of Provinces are women.

South Africa provides training for women mediators in the African region. Such mediators will make up an African women mediators' network that can assist in peace negotiations. In addition to that, the South African National Defence Force operates the Peacekeeping Training Centre in Pretoria, where women peacekeepers from South Africa and throughout the region receive training. It must be stressed that the National Defence Force is highly aware of the fact that gender issues need to be highlighted, which is reflected in the fact that at present 30 per cent of our National Defence Force comprises women.

Additionally, we recently held the third Gertrude Shope Annual Dialogue Forum on Conflict Resolution and Peacemaking in Africa. That initiative includes participants from across the African continent and inspires women to play more important leadership and peacebuilding roles than they have traditionally played, without necessarily being part of an official delegation. That Forum also provides a platform that women can use to share their experiences, reflect on existing policies and challenges, and thereafter make recommendations to national, regional and international institutions.

This year saw the adoption the historic Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons on 7 July, and we are pleased that South Africa was one of the first countries to sign that Treaty on 20 September. South Africa wishes to warmly congratulate the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons for being awarded the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize. That well-deserved and timely award is a clear recognition of the role played by civil-society organizations in the area of nuclear disarmament in pursuit of a world free of nuclear weapons. Allow me to pay special tribute to women's organizations for their active role in the abolishment of nuclear weapons, including the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom based in Geneva.

In order to strengthen the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and the resolutions that build upon it, including resolution 2242 (2015), my country continues to engage with representatives of civil society and academia to find ways to further empower women and remove obstacles that impede their participation in peacekeeping missions and mediation efforts on the African continent. Furthermore, we fully support the various solidarity missions to Africa that have been led by UN-Women and the African Union recently.

South Africa looks forward to further cooperation and the sharing of experiences with Member States, UN-Women, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and other partners that seek to further incorporate gender perspectives and the concerns of women in order to enhance the sustainability of peace and security in all conflict situations. We support the slogan HeforShe.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Ms. Wilson (Australia): As we have heard today, the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/861) is clear. We have made progress on policy and normative change. But we need to further mainstream gender equality and ensure the effective implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. We must move from ad-hoc programmes and words on paper to ensuring that women are included in all aspects of this agenda as a matter of course.

That is possible. Australia commends the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund for exceeding its target, with 20 per cent of funding focused on promoting women's participation in peacebuilding. That shows the positive outcomes that can be achieved by focusing on implementation, setting clear targets and investing in dedicated gender expertise. Australia is pleased that our $10 million commitment to the Fund is helping countries build sustainable peace. We have also increased the number of our women officers serving as staff officers and military observers in United Nations missions to 25 per cent, exceeding the commitment made at the 2016 Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial Conference.

Australia commends the Department of Political Affairs for its oversight of dedicated efforts across a range of special political missions in 2016, which resulted in a substantial increase in the deployment of gender expertise, with 25 gender advisers working across 11 field missions. Australia is pleased to have helped with that expansion by providing the first-ever military gender adviser to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan. We have also seconded a senior military officer to UN-Women here in New York as a technical expert on women and peace and security. That officer is assisting in the conduct of the female military officers' course and helping UN-Women country teams as they work to increase gender equality in local armed forces.

Such efforts demonstrate that with dedicated funding and specific targets, we can improve women's participation, but all key actors must play a role in implementing the women and peace and security agenda. We must also acknowledge the expertise and enduring capability of civil society. Civil-society groups often predate conflicts and will carry on after them, and civil society is our greatest source of expertise on the ground. That is why Australia is also pleased to be the founding — and largest — supporter of the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, which supports civil-society organizations in contributing to conflict prevention, crisis response and peacebuilding.

To sustain peace we must include women, not just in our words but in our actions. We must all accelerate and strengthen practical efforts to place women front and centre in the peace and security agenda.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Cho Tae-yul (Republic of Korea): I would first like to join previous speakers in commending the French presidency's initiative in convening today's open debate on the critical issue of women and peace and security.

I would also like to align myself with the statements delivered earlier by the representatives of Canada and Turkey, respectively, on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security and the MIKTA group of Mexico, Indonesia, Korea, Turkey and Australia.

In 2000, the landmark resolution 1325 (2000) laid a robust normative foundation, on which we have made considerable progress, for strengthening the protection of women in conflict and facilitating women's participation in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. Despite that progress, however, a wide gap still remains between our goals and the reality on the ground. Civilians, particularly women and girls, continue to get caught up in armed conflicts in many parts of the world. That is also a historical issue, and much work remains to be done on it. The effects of sexual violence perpetrated in the past can persist in its victims as deep trauma. With that in mind, I would like to highlight three points as we strive to implement and further strengthen the normative frameworks of the agenda on women and peace and security.

First, we must coordinate our efforts better if we are to prevent women from falling victim to violence. The Secretary-General's report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2017/249) shows that terrible sexual violence continues to occur in conflict and post-conflict situations. We must scale up our collective efforts to prevent sexual violence in conflicts and hold all perpetrators accountable for their heinous crimes. We continue to be disturbed by occasional reports of alleged crimes committed by peacekeeping operations personnel, despite the fact that intensive efforts have been made to combat the problem. We should not tolerate any form of sexual exploitation or abuse by United Nations peacekeepers. In that regard, I commend the Secretary-General's determination and welcome his initiatives aimed at stamping out such crimes, including the voluntary compact and Circle of Leadership.

Secondly, our professed goal of increasing the participation of women in peace efforts must be translated into concrete action. That was highlighted by the 2015 global study on women and peace and security and its follow-up resolution 2242 (2015), as well as 2016's twin resolutions on sustaining peace — resolution 2282 (2016) and General Assembly resolution 70/262. Noting the variety of initiatives that have been undertaken at the national, regional, and international levels, I urge all Member States to continue such endeavours so that they can all lead to tangible results.

The Republic of Korea, for its part, adopted its own national action plan on women and peace and security in 2014, and has been scaling up its efforts to increase women's participation in peace efforts ever since. As a result, we have met the 15 per cent target for women peacekeeping officers, and will continue to increase women's participation in the future.

Thirdly, we must ensure that the ongoing efforts to reform the United Nations peace and security architecture contribute to the women and peace and security agenda. I welcome the fact that, in his recent report (A/72/525) on restructuring the United Nations peace and security pillar, the Secretary-General once again emphasized his determination to ensure women's meaningful participation in all peace efforts at all stages of the conflict cycle. I also commend his efforts to promote women's participation in peace processes and to enhance gender equality, especially through the selection process for high-level United Nations positions.

I look forward to hearing more details from the Secretary-General on how the women and peace and security agenda will be promoted in the new architecture's peace and security pillar. As the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), I am committed to working closely with him in that regard. When I assumed the chairmanship of the PBC earlier this year, I announced that I would build on the Commission's ongoing work to promote gender dimensions in peacebuilding efforts. For the first time since its inception in 2005, the PBC has appointed gender focal points to implement the gender strategy it adopted in September 2016, with Bangladesh and Canada currently serving as those focal points.

The PBC has been increasing women's participation in peacebuilding efforts at the country-specific level as well. Most recently, during the PBC Organizational Committee meeting on Solomon Islands, which was attended by the country's Prime Minister, PBC members engaged with a representative of the country's Young Women's Parliamentary Group. The Chairs of the country-specific configurations of the Commission have also been engaging with women's groups and individuals in their work, in both meetings and visits to the countries on their agenda. The PBC will continue its ongoing efforts to further promote gender perspectives in sustaining peace.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the Republic of Korea's commitment to promoting the women and peace and security agenda both in its national capacity and as Chair of the PBC.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Ireland.

Ms. Nason (Ireland): Ireland takes women and peace and security seriously. Almost 20 years after the Good Friday Agreement and our own peace process in Ireland, we firmly believe in the importance of the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution and peacekeeping and -building. I think it is fair to say that we are a testament to that. The Secretary-General's report (S/2017/861) correctly highlights that if we are to successfully deliver on the women and peace and security agenda, we absolutely need broad-based cooperation and coherence in what we do, and that must be at the international, regional and national levels. We see this as essential to the fundamentally transformative nature of the women and peace and security agenda. I stress that none of us can deliver that alone. We have to work together and, importantly, it is crucial that we work in full partnership with civil society. This year and next, Ireland, as Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women will embed the women and peace and security agenda in everything we do. We look forward to working hand in hand with our excellent partner UN-Women to deliver on that.

All the evidence shows that ensuring women's empowerment and participation in peacebuilding is critical to creating any lasting peace. It is not just the right thing to do, it has been shown to be the smart and, if I may say so, the efficient way to deliver on sustainable peace. Initiatives strengthening women's capacity to participate in peace processes and enhancing gender expertise and mediation need our support. We thank the United Nations entities, including UN-Women, that are working every day to find the tools to do that.

Ireland currently funds non-governmental organizations that we think can make a difference in this area, including the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and its "Women at the Peace Table — Africa" initiative in Nigeria, the Dialogue Advisory Group and the Mediation Support Unit of the Department of Political Affairs. Last year we hosted a regional workshop on the acceleration of resolution 1325 (2000) in which the discussion was devoted to gender advisers from peacekeeping operations in the United Nations, the European Union (EU) and NATO. Ireland is also a founding member and a key funder of the excellent Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund. We support women in that role in peacebuilding, conflict prevention and accountability. The Fund facilitates valuable civil-society initiatives in conflict-affected countries such as Burundi, promoting women's leadership on the ground. We are working in Jordan for the empowerment of Syrian refugees. Frankly, we need to do more of that.

Nationally, Ireland is currently working to implement resolution 1325 (2000) through our second national action plan on women and peace and security. We are particularly focusing on the empowerment and participation of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. We welcome the Secretary-General's recognition of the importance of synergies between the agendas on young people and peace and security and women and peace and security. Ireland is pleased to be funding the progress study on youth, peace and security led by the Peacebuilding Support Office. We see the role and potential of young women's meaningful participation in peacebuilding as significant, and we must challenge the obstacles that prevent young women on the ground from participating. The interlinking of these two agendas is an area that we plan to highlight as we build our third national action plan for 2018.

I am proud to say that the Irish Defence Forces have adopted their own action plan for women and peace and security, mainstreaming the priorities across all areas of their policy, including in their overseas engagement. There are trained gender advisers and focal points in all units, and our Defence Forces are committed to doubling the rate of female participation in peacekeeping by 2021. We strongly support and implement a policy of zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse.

Of course, many women are vulnerable. Ireland welcomes the Secretary-General's focus on the protection of women and girls during conflict and in humanitarian responses. We make sure that our Irish aid policies make the protection of women and girls a top priority in our rapid-response initiatives. We support accountability initiatives for ending impunity for sexual exploitation and abuse, including through working in partnership with Justice Rapid Response and UN-Women. We would like to underscore Ireland's major cooperation with and financial support to the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Ireland is one of only 14 States, along with the EU, that are signatories to the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies. This is a multi-stakeholder initiative to fundamentally transform the way gender-based violence is addressed in humanitarian action, and we fully support it.

On disarmament, another matter that is a key priority for us, Ireland's gender and disarmament policy recognizes the specific effects that the use of weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons have on women and girls. We actively emphasize the importance of women's participation in disarmament discourse and salute women's capacity to act as a positive force for change in that regard, something that we are already seeing evidence of.

I could sum up by saying that much has been done, but there is more to do. The challenges remain and even grow. I used only mention migration and international protection as two examples of the major hills, or perhaps mountains, that we have to climb. Ireland is ready to play its part fully in addressing them.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Perera (Sri Lanka): I thank the French presidency of the Security Council for organizing today's open debate. I would also like to thank the briefers for their remarks and to acknowledge the contributions by the Executive Director of UN-Women and other representatives.

As we mark the seventeenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), it presents an opportunity to reflect on our achievements and challenges in the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. The issues of the different impact that armed conflict has on women and girls and their exclusion from conflict prevention, peacebuilding and peacekeeping continue to be critical aspects of the work that we still have ahead of us in that regard, at both the international and domestic levels.

There is undoubtedly an indissoluble link between gender inequality and international peace and security. Indeed, finding ways to increase women's inclusion in peacekeeping and end the problem of sexual abuse and exploitation have been two of the most challenging aspects of the women and peace and security agenda. Despite several Council resolutions, including resolution 2106 (2013), which encouraged troop- and police-contributing countries to increase the number of women recruited and deployed in peace operations, and resolution 2272 (2016), of March 2016, which explicitly tackled sexual exploitation and abuse, a holistic transformative culture remains largely absent. In that regard, we are pleased to announce that Sri Lanka has taken the initiative — together with the participation of the Permanent Mission of Canada, the International Civil Society Action Network and the Association of War Affected Women — to co-host a side event at the United Nations on 31 October on ending sexual exploitation and abuse and increasing the numbers of women in peacekeeping, in order to mark the seventeenth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000). We invite everyone here to attend this interactive discussion so that we can raise greater awareness and work together to better serve our communities.

Sri Lanka has demonstrated its wholehearted commitment to the elimination of sexual exploitation and abuse. We were one of the first countries to sign the Secretary-General's voluntary compact on preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse. Our President, His Excellency Mr. Maithripala Sirisena, has joined the Secretary-General's Circle of Leadership on preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations operations, and we have made contributions to the United Nations Trust Fund in support of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Historically, Sri Lanka has made strides in the area of women's empowerment. We adopted a women's charter two years before the Beijing Platform for Action, and we already have in place a national plan of action on women. But we know that more remains to be done. Sri Lanka takes the responsibility of promoting and protecting the rights of women very seriously, including preventing conflict-related sexual violence and sexual exploitation and abuse as an urgent priority.

Sri Lanka's long-drawn-out conflict has resulted in a large number of victims, including orphans, war widows, single mothers and female-headed households. We are committed to addressing their immediate concerns and making them participants in all areas of peacebuilding and peacekeeping. This will continue to be a priority in our post-conflict peacebuilding efforts.

Successful peacebuilding means working to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment — including economic empowerment, human security, human rights and development — mesh together. It is also vital that we engage domestic actors, from the grassroots to the highest echelons of Government, in ensuring ownership of peacebuilding processes and guaranteeing long-term sustainability. In all those endeavours, we are committed to including women as essential participants in the conversation. In a reflection of Sri Lanka's commitments, and as we tread the path of reconciliation and transformative justice, my Government has appointed an 11-member task force of eminent persons to hold nationwide consultations on reconciliation measures. The members of the task force are entirely drawn from civil society and include six women. However, all this can be done only by acknowledging the existence of institutionalized structural gender bias, identifying the associated problems and sincerely seeking solutions to them.

Sri Lanka has been making modest contributions to United Nations peacekeeping efforts for more than five decades. We are equally committed to including our highly trained and disciplined women forces in our peacekeeping efforts. Furthermore, as Sri Lanka proceeds in its reconciliation and peacebuilding process, with the active participation of women at all levels, we will continue to share our experiences and practices, especially in relation to the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Kenya.

Mr. Kamau (Kenya): Kenya commends France for convening today's important open debate.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women and Peace and Security.

We also welcome the 2017 report (S/2017/861) of the Secretary-General and its recognition of the fact that the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and facilitates sustained peace and the prevention of conflict.

On 8 March 2016, International Women's Day, the Government launched Kenya's national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). Aptly entitled *Kuhusisha wanawake ni kudumisha amani*, which means "involving women to sustain peace," it has been very well received in our country. The plan draws on relevant national, regional and international instruments to address the intersecting areas related to security, peacebuilding and conflict resolution, as well as to ending impunity for violence against women, promoting gender mainstreaming and protecting human rights.

With regard to participation and promotion, Kenya is ranked first in the world among troop-contributing countries in its deployment of military female officers. I am happy to report that today our deployment of women in peace support operations stands at 19 per cent, surpassing the United Nations-recommended percentage of 15 per cent. Efforts aimed at increasing female professional advancement and improving gender balance in our military leadership have led to many women being promoted to the ranks of brigadier or colonel.

Kenya's gender policy guides the integration of gender and resolution 1325 (2000) into all our military operations. It is behind our project for engendering peacebuilding activities in Kenya, which is now the basis for our establishment of a national conflict early-warning and early-response system. On prevention, the Government has established an international peace support training centre for enhancing the capacity of both women and men as meaningful participants in peacebuilding, negotiations and preventive diplomacy at the community and national levels. On protection, we have launched a country-wide campaign, Jitokeze — which means "speak out" — aimed at breaking the silence on gender-based violence.

Among my Government's efforts to promote countrywide sensitization to the gender dimensions of peace and security are its formulation of a 2016 bill on access to public information and a review of our national information and communications technology policy. Our establishment of a toll-free number, the Gender Helpline, and revitalization of various platforms for peace dialogue and online reporting have increased the number of users accessing early-warning and early-response systems throughout the country. The Government's efforts have been complemented by various non-State actors, including the media. A network of 150 journalists are permanently engaged with the Kenya national action plan to build media capacity on gender- and conflict-sensitive reporting through training workshops.

With regard to the relief and recovery pillar, the Government's efforts include establishing, first, clear guidelines on referral pathways within medical facilities for sexual and gender-based violence survivors; secondly, national guidelines and standard operating procedures for the psychosocial management of survivors and forensic management; and thirdly, gender-based violence recovery centres within health facilities, which help to create access to justice for survivors, with noted improvements in the investigation and prosecution of gender-based violence cases.

In September 2016, the President launched a national strategyfor countering violent extremism that incorporates women into its county security and intelligence committees, which are also linked to local peace committees and community policing initiatives.

The rapidly changing nature of terrorism and the limited research available on it is a major concern for us. Kenya's priorities for future action in these areas include climate change and its impact on women and peace and security; disarmament for nomadic populations where illicit small arms proliferate; the increased insecurity that results from regional instability and growing border conflicts; the radicalization of young people; the emerging forms and dynamics of cyber- and technology-led crime, including electronic violence against women, which is becoming more prevalent; the mobilization of funding for women and peace and security initiatives, including closing the gap between research and practice. We are also working on establishing a strong monitoring system for the Kenya's national action plan for women and peace and security and, lastly, we are setting up a central depository for peace and security data that can be accessed by everyone.

In conclusion, Kenya remains committed to implementing the women and peace and security agenda in full measure. We support the reinforcement of the United Nations Trust Fund in support of actions to eliminate violence against women and the United Nations Fund for Gender Equality. We continue to call for further support and increased funding for UN-Women.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

Mr. Islam (Bangladesh): Bangladesh thanks the French presidency for convening today's open debate.

We align ourselves with the statement delivered earlier by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

In open debates on women and peace and security, Bangladesh usually focuses on a particular set of issues. This time, however, we have to depart from that. One of the briefers this morning referred to the crisis in Myanmar. That description hardly captures the grim realities of the catastrophe. In the past two months, nearly 600,000 people, mostly Rohingya and the majority of them women and children, have fled to Bangladesh in sheer desperation to save their lives and dignity. Thousands are still arriving on an almost daily basis. In her address to the General Assembly this year, our Prime Minister said that the

> "forcibly displaced people of Myanmar are fleeing an ethnic cleansing in their own country, where they have been living for centuries." (*A/72/PV.14, p. 14*)

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has also termed it a textbook example of ethnic cleansing.

As is evident from numerous eyewitness accounts, rape and sexual violence have been systematically used as a main tactic by Myanmar security forces in order to drive the Rohingya out of Myanmar and prevent them from returning to their homes. In its report released on 11 October, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights rapid response mission to Bangladesh says that

> "[w]ell into the course of the mission, more and more information began to be shared both by girls and women who had survived rape or other forms of sexual violence. Information was collected related to girls as young as five to seven years of age who had been raped, often in front of their relatives, and sometimes by three to five men taking turns, all dressed in army uniforms."

The rest of the report makes disturbing reading, but to cite further,

> "[t]estimonies also indicate that many women, even ones who were pregnant, were raped. In several cases, women and girls were reportedly raped in their homes and at police stations, and at other times in full view of family members, including children; anyone trying to protect their female kin was dealt with severely by the perpetrators."

The Special Advisers of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect, respectively, have made a compelling case, and in their words,

> "Myanmar has failed to meet its obligations under international law and primary responsibility to protect the Rohingya population from atrocity crimes. The international community has equally failed its responsibilities in this regard."

As a country that played an instrumental role in the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), we cannot remain silent or objective in the face of such atrocities happening just across our border in total impunity. In Bangladesh, our humanitarian partners are trying, to the extent that they can, to provide support to the women and girls who have survived rape and sexual violence. Special priority has been given to supporting the nearly 2,000 pregnant women who have fled to Bangladesh so far. Properly addressing the gender-sensitive issues of protection and assistance in already overcrowded camps, amid vulnerable host communities, is an uphill task. The team of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict is visiting the camps this weekend, while the Special Representative herself will be there the following week. She had previously urged the Myanmar authorities to issue clear orders through the military chain of command to prohibit such crimes, conduct rigorous investigation and accountability processes, institute training for the security forces and implement a policy of zero tolerance, in line with resolution 2106 (2013), on sexual violence in conflict.

It is high time to move past words into action. The Security Council has spoken with one voice in condemning the violence, but it must show its resolve by sending an unequivocal message to Myanmar through a resolution calling for an immediate cessation of the violence and unfettered humanitarian access for all those affected, as well as for action to ensure the safe, dignified and sustained return of all those who have been forcibly displaced to Bangladesh and accountability for the perpetrators.

The significant number of Member States that today have reaffirmed their commitment to ending sexual violence during armed conflict should also demonstrate their support for the draft resolution being steered through the General Assembly by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. If Member States unite and stand behind that draft resolution, it would assure the people who have been violated, battered, forcibly evicted and traumatized that they are entitled to return to their place of residence in safety, security and dignity, and can consider doing so. Only if, and when, they can voluntarily return to Myanmar can the road map outlined by the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State make a real, meaningful difference on the ground.

Bangladesh will continue to pursue its bilateral efforts with Myanmar as far as it can, but the international community must accompany us in the process. The Rohingya women and girls have not yet had a chance to have their voices heard in this Council, but as the Special Advisers have said, "Once again, our failure to stop atrocity crimes makes us complicit."

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Albania.

Ms. Kadare (Albania) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to thank the French presidency for convening today's open debate on such an important subject.

(*spoke in English*)

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report and recommendations (S/2017/861), and the Executive Director of UN-Women and the Secretary General of the International Organization of La Francophonie for their briefings, as well as Ms. Mina-Rojas for the reality check that she brought to the Chamber from the real world.

Albania aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union, and I want to add the following remarks in my national capacity.

We now have accumulating evidence that achieving gender equality and empowering women contribute to the success of peace talks and the achievement of sustainable peace, accelerate economic recovery, improve humanitarian assistance, help counter violent extremism and prevent human rights violations. There has been genuine progress since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), and Member States are progressively integrating their principles and obligations into their national legal frameworks.

However, the implementation of the normative framework is lagging behind. Despite the international community's commitment, the meaningful inclusion of women in preventing conflicts and negotiating peace processes is still inadequate. Women continue to be sidelined during peace negotiations, and even when they are present it is always the men who decide when and how to make peace. We Member States should strengthen our resolve to fully implement the women and peace and security agenda in order to effect real change on the ground.

Albania has made significant progress in empowering women and achieving gender equality. Today women in Albania constitute 28 per cent of Parliament and 50 per cent of the Council of Ministers. Although we have not yet adopted a national action plan for resolution 1325 (2000), gender is mainstreamed across the security sector under the umbrella of our national strategy on gender equality and fight against domestic violence. We have also integrated the objectives of resolution 1325 (2000) into our strategies for human-resources management in the armed forces and for public order in Albania's State police.

As a result, women's participation in the armed forces has increased, and today 17 per cent of our military personnel are women. Albania's current Minister of Defence is a woman, as was her predecessor. In addition, policies and regulations have been developed with a view to facilitating the promotion of women in their careers and through the ranks. The State police has instituted a temporary 50 per cent quota for women in their recruitment policy in order to accelerate the increase in women's representation. Women now represent 14 per cent of the State police, while specific training programmes have been introduced to promote them in operational command roles.

We are currently drafting our national action plan with the support of our Dutch partners, UN-Women, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union delegation. We are making sure that the drafting process brings together not only the relevant Government stakeholders, but also civil society and women's groups, as that is the best way to increase ownership and political will for its future implementation. Regional action plans also play an important role in promoting peace and security. In that context, Albania has pledged its full support to the Italian initiative of creating a Mediterranean women mediators network, which is a concrete mechanism that aims to prevent and mitigate conflict through the increased participation of women in peace processes.

Finally we encourage the United Nations system to ensure that gender perspectives are integrated across all its activities. Albania strongly supports the Secretary-General's efforts and personal commitment to advance gender equality and women's empowerment. I shall conclude by quoting his wise words: "Our world needs more women leaders. And our world needs more men standing up for gender equality."

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Hungary.

Ms. Bogyay (Hungary): Hungary aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union.

I thank France for convening today's open debate. Let me join others in thanking our briefers this morning for their very informative and moving reports.

In conflict-affected areas, women are agents for peace. They play a key role in ensuring family livelihoods in the midst of chaos and are particularly active in community-building and peace movements at the grassroots level. Women's talent should be fully utilized not only in political decision-making, but also in countering violent extremism. At the local, national and international levels, we support the peace initiatives of local women and hope to see the important role civil society and women-led organizations play in peace processes recognized.

We believe that the issues on the women and peace and security agenda are interrelated and interconnected, and must be addressed as such. In order to ensure the effective implementation of the women and peace and security framework at the national and international level, close and comprehensive cooperation is needed among institutions and Governments. We must ensure a holistic approach from the local to the global level, using all tools available within the United Nations system.

Hungary is an active member of the Women, Peace and Security National Focal Points Network and continues to engage in interministerial consultations processes, with the goal of establishing a national mechanism on the implementation of the task deriving from the women and peace and security agenda. The Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade is now planning to organize an awareness-raising workshop on the women and peace and security agenda for the experts of the relevant ministries, the army, police, peacekeeping personnel, as well as for interested civil society organizations and academics. One of the topics of the workshop will be dedicated to women's effective participation in peacebuilding.

Hungary is deeply concerned about the growing threat and use of violence against women human rights defenders. We should step up our efforts in combating that dangerous phenomenon more effectively, and develop a horizontal and specialized response. Hungary believes that youth engagement is important to forging sustainable peace and development and we need to empower girls so that later they become strong women and active members of their societies. We also believe that women's increased participation in peacekeeping missions is of the utmost importance. Their contribution could be particularly useful in designing, implementing and assessing strategies for the protection of civilians and humanitarian assistance. We are pleased to see the continued effort of the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the European Foundation Centre in building staff capacity and senior-level accountability on gender.

At the national level, Hungary is seeking to continuously increase the number of deployed female military experts and police officers in United Nations peacekeeping missions. Ending the culture of impunity is a major contributor to conflict-prevention and sustaining peace at the national and international level, since ensuring accountability for serious crimes helps us bring about reconciliation. Stable and resilient societies address injustice, promote human rights and build peaceful societies. We highly appreciate the work of the United Nations team of experts on the rule of law and sexual violence in conflict. Moreover, Hungary is a proud contributor to the invaluable work of the gender advisers deployed in the framework of the collaboration between UN-Women and Justice Rapid Response, as well as to UN-Women's work on preventing violent extremism.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Munir (Pakistan): We thank the French presidency of the Security Council for organizing today's very important meeting on realizing the promises of the women and peace and security agenda.

We thank the Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General, the Executive Director of UN-Women and the representatives of non-governmental organizations for their briefings this morning.

The past couple of decades have witnessed a sharp increase in the number of conflicts. Situations of chronic instability, violence, armed conflict and wars continue to affect women and girls disproportionately. From sexual violence to sexual exploitation and abuse inflicted by terrorist organizations and parties to the conflict, women carry a disproportionate burden of physical and psychological trauma during conflicts. What is worse is that the exploitation of women and girls is not an incidental by-product of conflict. It is an instrument widely employed to humiliate and terrorize civilians. According to the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/861), sexual violence continues to be employed as a tactic of war, with widespread and strategic rapes, including mass rapes, allegedly committed by several parties to armed conflicts. But to their credit, that has not held women back. Across the globe, they have been willing and able to share the burden of peacebuilding, peacemaking and conflict prevention.

The Security Council and its global efforts to end that dehumanizing practice have played a part in their endeavour. The landmark resolution 1325 (2000) both ushered in and institutionalized a new focus on women in conflict, moving their participation and rights to the front and centre of the political debate. Although challenges remain daunting and many new protection crises continue to emerge, our collective resolve to stamp out the scourge provides a reason for hope. In that regard, I would like to emphasize four specific points.

First, the Security Council, as the primary body tasked with maintaining peace and security, should focus on the root causes of conflict to remove the ground where such crimes breed. Secondly, the United Nations should play its unique role in enhancing cooperation and coordination with the relevant bodies to help secure for women their rightful place at the table. Thirdly, national Governments bear the primary responsibility for women's safety and rights. The international community should support countries concerned in their efforts to safeguard women's rights and provide assistance in that regard. Strengthening the capacity of national institutions is critical to that endeavour and UN-Women can play a major role. Fourthly, gender perspectives should be fully integrated into the peacebuilding paradigm to reinforce the protection environment. That would entail not only the greater participation of women in peacekeeping mandates, but also an enhanced role of women in peace accords and in the stabilization and reconstruction phases of post-conflict rehabilitation.

We fully support the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy for sexual exploitation and abuse. Pakistan was among the first batch of countries to sign the Secretary-General's voluntary compact on the subject. We have also contributed to the Trust Fund for victims of sexual exploitation and abuse.

In conclusion, let me recall that multidimensional peacekeeping missions with protection mandates play a key role in combating violence against women in conflict and post-conflict situations. As a leading troop-contributing country, Pakistan remains fully committed to that cause.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Maldives.

Mr. Mohamed (Maldives): My delegation wishes to thank the French presidency of the Council for convening this very timely open debate on women and peace and security. I also wish to extend our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his dedicated efforts on this issue.

Women can change the world for the better. For that to happen, national Governments and international organizations, such as the United Nations, must provide the space for women to shape key decisions concerning national security. We are strongly encouraged by the commitment of the Council to reinvigorating the discussion on women's participation in peace and security.

In many ways, the landmark resolution 1325 (2000), adopted 17 years ago, changed our perception towards ensuring the increased representation of women at all levels of decision-making in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts, as well as peacebuilding. Yet, 17 years after the resolution was adopted, and 40 years after the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, we have far too little to show.

The Maldives is blessed in that it is a peace-loving and peaceful country. At the same time, we in the Maldives also recognize women's role in peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding as part of the larger historic and holistic agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment. The principles of equality and non-discrimination are at the heart of the Maldives Constitution. The Maldives has achieved gender parity in education, with more female graduates than male, and more women with doctorate degrees in higher education. Women comprise over 60 per cent of our civil service and 40 per cent of our judiciary staff, inclusive of court officers and administrative staff.

National laws have been strengthened with new laws on sexual harassment, domestic violence and sexual offences to ensure the protection of women from sexual, physical and psychological abuse and violence. As a further step towards women's empowerment, new policies have been established by President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom that guarantee that 30 per cent of seats in all management boards of State companies go to women.

Legislation, laws and policies can take us only so far. As we see it, resolution 1325 (2000), with gender equality at its core, can be realized only through a change in our social practices, moving towards a culture of respect for women, of inclusivity, of recognizing that women, by virtue of being human, have equals rights as men. Changing laws are important, but ultimately it is the change in hearts and minds that matters.

Research shows that seeing more women in positions of power and decision-making roles can in turn increase acceptance and, thereby, the perception of women in decision-making. That is why the Government of Maldives has focused on ensuring that women have an equal share in key decisions of the Government. That is why our police force is celebrated as having the highest percentage of women in South Asia. That is why, here at the United Nations, our envoys — our messengers of peace — must include women at the top levels. As a symbol of commitment, the Secretary-General could perhaps increase the number of women as his special representatives, especially in conflict resolution.

Countries and societies will become stronger, more prosperous, more stable and, indeed, more peaceful when women are agents and managers of change. The Council can and should drive that change. The Council can do that with more credibility if it is more inclusive, and the Maldives stands ready to contribute to and be the partner in shaping our common future — a shared destiny where women will call the shots.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mrs. Gregoire-Van-Haaren (Netherlands) (*spoke in French*): I thank the French presidency for organizing this important debate today.

(*spoke in English*)

The Kingdom of the Netherlands aligns itself fully with the statement of the European Union. We also fully support the statements made by the Permanent

Representative of Italy and by the Permanent Representative of Canada as Chair of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

We also wish to thank the Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General for her briefing, and the Secretary-General for his report (S/2017/861) and leadership on this issue.

Nalia, Valérie, Angèle, Arlette, Josephine, Alice, Martine, Marie, Nicole and Natifa are names that deserve to be mentioned in the Council, because they are names that appeared in this month's report of Human Rights Watch on widespread sexual violence by armed groups in the Central African Republic. The report observes how, during nearly five years of conflict, those groups have used rape and sexual slavery as a tactic of war. As such, it provides us with both a gruesome reminder of how conflict affects women and a painful reminder of the acute relevance of resolution 1325 (2000) to this day. That reminder is painful because it reminds us that, eight resolutions down the road, we need to have a serious talk about the resolution's implementation.

Women are still not actively engaged in many peace processes, including those that are United Nations-led or assisted, and are therefore not recognized as the powerful agents of peace they are. If we truly want to practice what we preach, we must pressure parties to a peace process to include women, and not leave it as an afterthought, because those that have briefed the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, or someone like Ms. Mina-Rojas, today are living proof of what the meaningful participation of women could do for peace processes. However, if they cannot, conflicts are often prolonged and women and girls bear the brunt. As the Secretary-General rightfly observes in his report,

> "Commitments become meaningful accomplishments, changing lives and transforming societies, only upon implementation" (*S/2017/861, para. 6*).

Today, I wish to emphasize three conditions that need to be met in order to make resolution 1325 (2000) become a reality.

It is good to remind ourselves, firstly, that gender mainstreaming is not a goal in itself, but rather an instrument — an instrument to achieve a transformative peace agenda. The meaningful and balanced participation of women and men has the potential to transform conflict prevention and peace processes. Resolution 1325 (2000) was adopted with that transformative intent.

We do not tick the box, let alone implement resolution 1325 (2000), by simply having women around the table; it is not simply about the numbers. We have to integrate a women's perspective and let the voice of women's organizations on the ground be heard at mediation tables through their substantive participation. If we do, there is a 35 per cent increase in the probability of a peace agreement lasting more than 15 years. That figure alone speaks for itself. In that respect, I welcome the meeting the visiting mission to the Sahel held with women's organizations in Mali. Ideally, in future missions, that would not be a separate session, but rather the voice of women would be integrated into the other meetings.

Secondly, in order to be implemented, resolution 1325 (2000) needs to be translated not just into United Nations languages, but into plans and activities. It needs to be operationalized and, equally important, funded. To date, 68 Members have devised their national action plans. While we applaud those Members that did so, the Kingdom of the Netherlands strongly calls on the remaining two-thirds of the United Nations membership to follow suit. The Kingdom of the Netherlands, moreover, is sadly one of just a handful that actually finance their national action plans. More funds should be made available if we are serious about making gender equality a practical reality.

Thirdly and lastly, in all of that, as the Secretary-General also states to conclude in his report, the United Nations should "lead and inspire by example" (*ibid., para. 111*) by including sufficiently strong language on women and peace and security in all of our mission's mandates; by systematically applying a gender lens in strategic reviews and analysing the power dimensions between women, men and youth in conflict dynamics; by consequently requesting troop-contributing countries to train all peacekeepers on gender and subsequently actually deploying women to the field; by showing zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse through transparency, accountability and careful victim care; and, as justly advocated by the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, by upgrading rather than downgrading the role of gender advisers in peacekeeping missions. We welcome efforts made by other troop-contributing countries to that effect, and we particularly support Canada's efforts to include gender as part of the discussions and pledges at the Vancouver Defence Peacekeeping Ministerial Conference next month.

In conclusion, the challenge and responsibility are upon us to integrate resolution 1325 (2000) into a transformative peace agenda — one that is operationalized and funded and on which the United Nations leads the way. Its implementation should enable the likes of Valérie, Alice and Nicole to lead the peace talks in their country. Let me finish by reiterating once again the support of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for resolution 1325 (2000), as well as our genuine commitment to its implementation.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of El Salvador.

Mr. Jaime Calderón (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): We wish to associate ourselves with the statement made by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

El Salvador is pleased to participate in this important open debate focused on the theme of women and peace and security. We wish to express our commitment to the work of the Council on this agenda item.

El Salvador, as a country that overcame an armed conflict through negotiation, is a faithful advocate for the commitment to peace and development. We are convinced that the consolidation of democracy and its institutions is a determining factor in the development of our peoples. In recent years, El Salvador has made important advances in its protection of women's rights legislation and architecture because of its belief that gender equality and the empowerment of women are fundamental conditions for development, governance, peace and democracy.

Likewise, for El Salvador it is important to recognize the role played by women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in the consolidation of peace, as recognized in resolution 1325 (2000). We therefore consider it essential to give attention to the violence against women by including the problem as an important component of public policy. That is why in July, El Salvador launched its national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, which bolsters our commitment to women in different areas, particularly in building peace and security.

The plan represents the efforts made on this issue since 2014 with the establishment of a national committee for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions. It is a pioneering document in the Central American region, and includes in its five pillars measures to promotw the inclusion of women in peace consolidation processes, especially in the area of citizen security. Furthermore, the actions set out in the national action plan transcend the security issue by outlining innovative actions that address other aspects of social security, which we consider to be equally important for a comprehensive approach and implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

El Salvador is involved in an ongoing process of internal dialogue that seeks the engagement of all stakeholders of the country with a view to continuing to build upon the peace it achieved in 1992 by promoting the participation of women and their experience on gender issues, in accordance with the provisions of resolution 1325 (2000). We recognize the indispensable role of women and young people in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, and emphasize the need to promote their full participation in the maintenance and promotion of peace.

Moreover, El Salvador considers it essential to guarantee the highest level of ethical conduct of personnel participating in the United Nations peacekeeping operations, and we therefore reiterate our absolute commitment to the Organization's policy of zero tolerance of sexual exploitation and abuse. In that regard, as a country we have voluntarily joined the Secretary-General's compact to end sexual exploitation and abuse.

We would also like to express our appreciation for the measures taken by the Organization within the framework of prevention, training and assistance to victims, and we stress the importance of reviewing the progress made in that aspect and of including a focus on reducing the stigmatization of survivors of sexual violence in conflict zones. El Salvador wishes to reiterate its commitment to supporting peacekeeping operations by contributing the best trained personnel and including more women in the troops and police assigned to different missions.

To conclude, we reiterate our support for all initiatives that ensure the participation of women in various contingents, in accordance with the provisions of resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions of the Security Council. We recognize the important work of France in presiding over the Security Council, and we thank UN-Women for its support for and technical, political and financial assistance to our national committee efforts and in the preparation of our national action plan of the resolution. I call on it to continue supporting our country's growth in such important area. We hope that by learning of our experience, other countries of the region will also be encouraged to work in greater depth on the issue of peace and security, especially from the perspective of inclusion manifested in resolution 1325 (2000).

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to representative of Chile.

Mr. Barros Melet (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the delegation of France for convening this open debate and we appreciate the statements made by the briefers. We extend special greetings to the civil society representative from our region.

Chile aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Canada, on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, and of Panama, on behalf of the Human Security Network.

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/861) and express our support for the initiatives related to the voluntary compact to end sexual exploitation and abuse, which Chile has signed, the appointment of the victims' rights advocate, the Senior Women Talent Pipeline initiative, and the strategy for the equal participation of men and women in the Organization.

Chile was a Latin American pioneer in developing an action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) in 2009, under the administration of President Bachelet, conscious of the important role played by women as agents of change and forgers of peace. The second national action plan is now in full implementation, with a strong emphasis on education and staff training.

The new plan includes the recommendations of the Security Council and international best practices in that area, making strides in creating indicators to measure progress on specific objectives that facilitate and promote women's access within peace operations at all levels of action and decision. We have incorporated a gender perspective in doctrine, planning and carrying out of Chile's peace operations in all four thematic areas and goals established by the United Nations: prevention, participation, protection and relief, and recovery. Chile co-sponsored resolution 2242 (2015), promoted by Spain, and is a founding member of the Women, Peace and Security National Focal Points Network. The Network's last meeting in September reaffirmed its commitment to continuing to support and develop women's participation in decision-making in all areas.

Equal opportunity and the empowerment of women has been a key pillar of our Government's gender agenda, which has made solid progress such as the incorporation of gender equality in electoral reform, and which requires that at least 40 per cent of candidates running for Congress be women. At the international level, we promote and protect women's rights in armed conflict, especially given the need to increase women's participation in decision-making related to international peace and security. That is how we bolster women's presence in peace missions both in Haiti and in Colombia's special political mission. In the field of prevention, we are developing academic initiatives based on the women and peace and security agenda, incentivizing the inclusion of a gender perspective in sustaining peace activities.

The inclusion of women in peace operations raises awareness about women's and children's issues on the ground in such operations, and their presence has helped prevent sexual exploitation and abuse. In that context, women both in peace operations and within communities have played a central role in sustaining peace and protecting women's rights. We echo the sentiments of previous speakers in affirming that one of the greatest challenges we face is increasing the participation of women in peace operations and, in particular, ensuring the presence of gender advisers in such operations.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Jamaica.

Mr. Rattray (Jamaica): Let me first thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2017/861) and acknowledge the efforts of the Secretariat, UN-Women and you, Madam President, in keeping the women and peace and security agenda alive. My delegation is pleased to be associated with the statement delivered on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women and Peace and Security.

I am honoured to be able to participate in the Security Council's open debate on resolution 1325 (2000). Jamaica has had a long history of association with that resolution and fondly recalls the deliberations that culminated with its adoption in 2000 during our tenure on the Security Council. We continue to regard it as seminal to our efforts to advance international peace and security. Jamaica believes that women must be recognized for the invaluable role that they can play in restoring broken communities and sustaining peace.

It is against that background that we share the views of the Secretary-General that more needs to be done to ensure women's meaningful participation in peace processes and the actual implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. However, we note with concern that we continue to fall short on implementation and are particularly worried about that fact, given the increasing challenges to peace and security around the world. We therefore concur with the view that preventative measures need to move beyond addressing the imminence of crisis to tackle structural and root causes, including gender inequality.

For its part, the Government of Jamaica has developed a national policy for gender equality to ensure that the principle of equality between men and women is advanced in both the public and the private spheres in Jamaica. The policy is aligned with our national development policy and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Indeed, in keeping with Sustainable Development Goal 5, Jamaica launched the HeForShe campaign in July 2016 as part of the wider global solidarity campaign created by UN-Women. The campaign was launched as a platform with which both men and boys can engage and become change agents towards the achievement of gender equality, as well as to end violence against women and girls. Additionally, as recent as July of this year, a national strategic action plan to eliminate gender-based violence (2017-2026) was approved by our Cabinet.

We agree with the Secretary-General's assessment that effective mechanisms should be established to ensure the meaningful measurement of results with respect to women and peace and security. My delegation would go even further to suggest that such mechanisms should take account of the cooperation and support that needs to be provided to ensure the attainment of the requisite results. Financing will be central to that endeavour. Jamaica therefore welcomes the fact that the Secretary-General has addressed this issue in his report. We fully concur with his assertion that we need

> "to reprioritize spending patterns, effectively coordinate funding instruments and explore innovative forms of flexible financing" (*S/2017/861, para. 97*).

Such efforts must supplement long-standing commitments that would guarantee adequate, predictable and sustainable financing.

We share the view that the focus on women and peace and security should, of necessity, take account of the role that young people and young women, in particular, can play as peacebuilders. We therefore value the work being done pursuant to resolution 2250 (2015) on youth, peace and security to bring this objective to fruition.

Ensuring the equal and effective participation of women and men is fundamental to building inclusive and peaceful societies. My delegation endorses efforts aimed at ensuring women's economic empowerment, promoting their participation in governance structures at all levels and enabling access to justice and security. Furthermore, women's roles in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control can also not be overstated. In that regard, Jamaica commends our sister Caribbean Community partner, Trinidad and Tobago, for spearheading the consideration by the First Committee of the biennial resolution on that issue. We are especially interested in ensuring continued progress towards addressing the gender specific effects of armed violence and ensuring women's full participation in gender-responsive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

A critical feature of that endeavour will be the engagement of civil society, which has been an invaluable partner throughout this entire process. Indeed, there can be no progress without the involvement of diverse stakeholders who are central to building confidence among local communities. It is in that regard that we commend the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security and the Peace Research Institute Oslo for developing the Women, Peace and Security Index, which was launched just yesterday.

In conclusion, my delegation is encouraged by the Secretary-General's personal commitment to ensuring that the United Nations fulfils its obligations in support of the women and peace and security agenda. We welcome intensified efforts that would result in more inclusive participation by and engagement of women in United Nations peace and security initiatives. It is our firm belief that it augurs well for the Organization as a whole and would provide the catalytic impact necessary to ensure the effectiveness of peace processes, secure economic development and realize social prosperity across the globe.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Aiuloom (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate the French Republic on presiding over the Council this month. We thank France for its transparent and tremendous efforts in steering the work of the Council. I also thank the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia for its work during its presidency last month.

Iraq seeks to increase the participation of women in public life. We are raising awareness among women of their social, economic and political rights. We apply the principle of gender equality via equal opportunity policies. This principle also applies to appointments to senior posts and representation in Parliament and municipal councils, in addition to decision-making and capacity-building.

Iraq's Constitution of 2005 protects and upholds the rights of women and provides for their care. It provides women with social and health insurance and a means of living in freedom and dignity. The Constitution considers all Iraqis equal before the law without discrimination based on gender, race, nationality or religion. We have increased the percentage of women in positions of leadership in Iraq since 2003. The new Iraqi Constitution establishes a quota of no less than 25 per cent for women holding seats in the Council of Representatives. We now have 83 female members of Parliament and ministers; 3 female ambassadors and 86 female judges. Iraqi women today have been able to become presidents of universities and deans of 75 colleges, in addition to mayor of the capital. The capital of Iraq has 7 million residents and has a woman mayor.

The advancement of women is an important step towards achieving peace and security. Therefore, Iraq continues to work with international organizations focused on the advancement of women and the empowerment of women in society. The Government is working with the gender unit of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) to achieve an agreement on a partnership between the national reconciliation committee and UNAMI aimed at enhancing the role of women in national reconciliation and awareness of the importance of resolution 1325 (2000).

The provision of equal opportunities to women and girls in all areas is the cornerstone of peace, prosperity and sustainability in the world. However, Iraq has suffered a vicious wave of terrorist attacks perpetrated, inter alia, by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). These attacks have threatened international peace and security. Iraqi Civilians, in particular women and girls, have suffered the most heinous forms of terrorist practices. We must draw attention to the crimes of that terrorist organization against thousands of Yazidi women and girls and other women in Iraq of various ages. They were sold as slaves in the areas along Iraq's border with Syria and were subjected to the worst forms of sexual enslavement. The international community must therefore redouble its efforts to assist Iraq in freeing, rehabilitating and reintegrating these women into society so that they can return to a normal life.

My Government has taken constructive steps to that end, including the signing of the joint communiqué between the United Nations and the Government of Iraq on the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence, on 23 September 2016. We continue to work with UNAMI in Baghdad and the technical team in New York of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict to implement the provisions of this statement through a national plan set out for that purpose. In addition, we established 19 June as the National Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Iraq sent a letter to the President of the Security Council on 9 August (S/2017/710, annex), conveying our hope and intention to see the Security Council adopt a resolution to ensure that members of ISIL would be held accountable for crimes they have committed in Iraq, including all acts that constitute crimes against humanity. We have sought the help of the international community in the condemnation of ISIL for murder, kidnapping, hostage-taking, sexual slavery and other forms of sexual violence, rape, sale into or otherwise forced marriage, in addition to the recruitment and use of children, attacks on infrastructure, the destruction of cultural heritage and trafficking in cultural property.

On 21 September, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2379 (2017), on collecting evidence of crimes committed by ISIL, in order to hold perpetrators accountable for their crimes and bring them to justice.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Austria.

Mr. Charwath (Austria): Let me begin by thanking France for convening this very pertinent open debate.

Austria aligns itself with the statements made earlier on behalf of the European Union, the Human Security Network and the Group of Friends on Women, Peace and Security.

As the President pointed out, we need to focus more on the implementation of the agenda. Austria is convinced that regional organizations, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), have a crucial role to play in translating our political commitments on the global level into concrete action and impact on the ground. As a consequence, we have put the implementation of resolutions 1325 (2000) and its successors high on the agenda of the Austrian OSCE chairmanship this year. Based on our experiences, let me share just three short points that we take away from our work in the OSCE.

First, there can be no sustainable solution to a conflict without the participation of women. In April, we organized a high-level retreat on effective peace processes and the inclusion of women, and we were able to collect concrete recommendations on how to increase women's meaningful participation in them.

Secondly, another key element is gender-responsive journalism and the protection of female journalists. While women are often portrayed only as victims, gender-responsive journalism can transform gender stereotypes, promote women's empowerment and raise awareness of the critical role of women in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. We will take this discussion forward in the OSCE on 3 November through an event on the role of the media in implementing the women and peace and security agenda.

The third point I would like to highlight is that regional organizations are ideally suited to building a bridge between the global framework and its national and local implementation. Therefore, Austria has repeatedly called for the adoption of an OSCE-wide action plan on women, peace and security, which would be a useful tool in this regard. Unfortunately, to date no consensus on the adoption of such action plan could be reached.

Having said this, we believe that the upcoming OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Vienna in December will provide a good opportunity to strengthen and reaffirm the OSCE commitments in this regard. We hope that the OSCE participating States will be able to support us in this endeavour and adopt the two draft decisions that we have tabled.

Finally, let me stress that Austria remains committed and will continue to promote women's rights, gender equality and the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in the OSCE region and beyond.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Georgia.

Ms. Agladze (Georgia): Let me first express our gratitude to the French presidency for convening today's debate on the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda.

Georgia aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union. Let me add few remarks in my national capacity.

As we approach the seventeenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), we once again underscore the importance attached to the issue of gender equality, women's empowerment and the protection of women's rights. Over the past years, that landmark resolution has established a complex agenda for States Members to further empower women and promote their rights and increased participation in peace and security efforts. Following the adoption of the resolution, the importance of women's role has gradually increased, particularly in conflict prevention and resolution, and in maintaining peace and security. However, more has to be done to achieve the full implementation of the women and peace and security agenda and the relevant resolutions.

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/861), which underlines the crucial role of women's increased participation in peace and decision-making processes at all levels. As stated in the report, efforts aimed at achieving peace and security, sustainable development and human rights must be linked not only in words but also in practice. It is obvious that the sustainability of peace depends directly on women's engagement in peace processes, politics, governance, institution-building, the rule of law, the security sector and economic recovery, and that the level of gender equality and the security of women are among the most reliable indicators of peace.

Georgia adopted a national policy framework and action plans for the effective implementation of the women and peace and security agenda early on. At present, the Government is in the process of drafting its third national action plan aimed at implementing resolution 1325 (2000) for the period 2018-2020. The new action plan, just like previous ones, is being developed in broad consultation with civil society together with national partners from line ministries, State institutions responsible for its implementation and women's organizations. The whole process is highly inclusive and transparent.

As an illustration of its strong commitment to improving and advancing gender equality and ensuring women's empowerment and the full protection of women's rights, Georgia recently ratified the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, also known as the Istanbul Convention, and established an inter-agency commission for gender equality and ending violence against women and girls at the executive branch. The commission represents the domestic coordination and monitoring mechanism envisaged by article 10 of the Istanbul Convention, and its work focuses on human rights, domestic violence, and women and peace and security.

While underlining the significance of strengthening protection measures with regard to violence against women and women's empowerment, our persistent concern relates to the women living in the occupied regions of Georgia — Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Women in the occupied territories continue to suffer grave violations of their fundamental rights and freedoms, including but not limited to the freedom of movement, among many others. The situation in the occupied territories is particularly alarming, given the absence of international monitoring missions. As we seek to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and deliver on the promise to leave no one behind, the rights of women living in the occupied regions of Georgia are of great concern for us.

We support the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General, and share the view that existing commitments need to be translated into practice. In that context, let me once again reiterate Georgia's readiness to join global efforts aimed at better implementing the women and peace and security agenda.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): We thank France for organizing this important meeting, and extend our appreciation to the Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General, the Executive Director of UN-Women, the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, and the Secretary-General of the International Organization of la Francophonie for their efforts and important briefings.

The issue before us is of relevance not only to half of the planet but to everyone, given the role and contribution of women in the area of peace and security, and the untapped potential that could be unleashed by mainstreaming their participation. Much has happened since the adoption by consensus of resolution 1325 (2000), and yet we remain far from the goal of full and equal participation, including in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding, and from ensuring the protection and empowerment of women. Gender equality and non-discrimination remain prerequisites for the fulfilment of the purposes and principles of the Organization, and all of our lofty, collective commitments, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The State of Palestine welcomes the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/861) and his commitment to implementing the women and peace and security agenda, including by placing gender at the centre of his prevention platform and surge in diplomacy. We appreciate all efforts of the United Nations in that regard, including by UN-Women, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Development Programme, notably in the area of human rights, capacity-building, employment and the rule of law. We urge United Nations bodies, notably those operating in Palestine, including the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, to intensify their engagement and collaboration with women's organizations.

I wish to highlight some of Palestine's own important efforts in that regard. The Palestinian women's movement is one of the oldest and strongest in and beyond the region, with institutional and representative structures established as early as the nineteenth century. Within the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), the General Union of Palestinian Women was among the first unions to be established. A coordination structure linking various women's groups within PLO political parties and other organizations was also established as the Women's Affairs Technical Committee, following the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference. Since then, there have been many other achievements, including the 2012 inauguration by Palestine of a high-level national committee for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), which was led by the Ministry of Women's Affairs in partnership with relevant Ministries and non-governmental organizations.

In 2016, the State of Palestine was among the 68 countries and entities that adopted a national action plan on women and peace and security. The 2017-2019 action plan, adopted by the Government and civil society organizations, identifies three primary objectives: first, ensuring the protection of women and girls both domestically and in the face of the Israeli occupation; secondly, ensuring accountability through national and international mechanisms, with a particular focus on crimes and violations committed by the occupation; and, thirdly, furthering women's political participation in decision-making at the national and international levels. The State of Palestine also joined core international humanitarian law and human rights instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, without reservations. Women's participation and empowerment are also important and cross-cutting objectives in the context of the national policy agenda for the period from 2017 to 2022.

We are, however, conscious that, despite all those efforts, much more work remains to be done. Only in 2009 was a women elected to the highest executive body of the PLO. Quotas are still decisive in allowing women's election to Parliament and local councils. Although women's organizations were among the strongest advocates of national reconciliation, they have been unfairly absent from reconciliation talks. The relevant, applicable legislative framework in Palestine is also outdated and must be revised to ensure consistency with Palestine's international commitments and obligations so as to provide women the protection and rights to which they are entitled and the opportunities they deserve.

The Palestinian women's movement, since its establishment over a century ago, has pursued the struggle on two fronts: the struggle for the independence of Palestine and the struggle for women's rights and empowerment. It is a dual struggle that the movement continues to pursue to this day. The Israeli occupation remains the main source of violations of our women's rights, their vulnerability and violence against their persons. We have repeatedly called for the protection of the Palestinian people, especially women and children. We have also called for accountability — a key element of resolution 1325 (2000), which was the first of its kind to address the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women, as the only way to end violations and crimes.

While Palestine stands ready to do its part to advance women's rights and the role of women in the area of peace and security, it is clear that the enjoyment of those rights in our country requires ending the Israeli occupation. We will therefore continue to work towards an end to the occupation and true progress on the path to independence, justice and peace with the equal and full involvement of women leading to an independent State of Palestine, ensuring human rights for all its citizens without discrimination.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Botswana.

Mr. Ntwaagae (Botswana): Let me to join others in thanking you and in congratulating you, Madam President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I also commend you for convening this open debate on women and peace and security. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his very comprehensive report (S/2017/861), which highlights the main achievements and challenges in advancing the women and peace and security agenda. Similarly, on behalf of my delegation, I wish to thank all the briefers for their very insightful contributions to the subject matter under discussion today.

Botswana fully supports the clarion call by the Executive Director of UN-Women to increase women's participation across the peace and security continuum, including in conflict prevention and resolution. My country reaffirms its commitment to the implementation of landmark resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, which this organ adopted 17 years ago. The resolution contributes significantly to efforts aimed at women's empowerment and participation in peace and security initiatives, particularly with regard to conflict prevention, peace and confidence-building measures. In furtherance of this noble objective, in 2015 a global study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) was undertaken. In the same year, the Secretary-General produced his report on women and peace and security (S/2015/716). Above all, the Global Acceleration Instrument for Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action was adopted.

The United Nations has made great strides in the promotion of the women and peace and security agenda through the establishment of UN-Women, which amplified women's voices and created momentum for women's leadership in the area of peace and security. In addition, the establishment of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the appointment of the Victims' Rights Advocate, the creation of the Trust Fund in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, and the Circle of Leadership on the prevention of, and response to, sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations operations will go a long way in addressing the challenges faced by women in the field and also in combating and preventing sexual exploitation and abuse. Through those initiatives, thousands of women and girls have been assisted in various countries around the globe.

Regrettably, women continue to bear the brunt of armed conflicts, domestic violence, sexual abuse, rape and humanitarian crises. The participation of women in conflict prevention and resolution, peacemaking and peacebuilding still remains low at the national, regional and international levels, although studies show that women's increased participation would significantly contribute to sustainable peace and stability.

The international community has to continue to address social norms that perpetuate sexual violence and abuse against women, and promote respect for international human rights law and humanitarian law. In that regard, we emphasize the primary responsibility of States to comply with their obligations to end impunity and effectively use all available means to enforce accountability by prosecuting all perpetrators of such crimes and abuses. We call on States to take practical steps to address obstacles in women's access to justice, including by creating an enabling environment where women can easily report incidents of violence without fear or intimidation. We furthermore urge all States to strengthen the capacity of their national criminal justice systems in order to facilitate victims' access to justice. Botswana recognizes the critical importance of gender equality and its mainstreaming in national development agendas, including of course in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In conclusion, I wish to applaud the Security Council for regularly convening open debates on women and peace and security since 2000, which has ensured that this matter remains at the top of the global agenda. We also support the work of various stakeholders towards the advancement of the women and peace and security agenda. I pledge Botswana's continued support for these endeavours.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Lal (India): We thank the delegation of France for convening this open debate. We also thank all the briefers for sharing updates on the ongoing efforts and the emerging trends regarding this agenda item.

The situations of armed conflict directly addressed by the Security Council over the past two decades have primarily been intra-State conflicts. Such internal armed conflict situations are often a result of a breakdown in the capacity of the State to enforce the rule of law and maintain effective governance. These conflicts also involve non-State actors and terrorist networks destroying the social fabric. In many of these conflicts the world has, regrettably, seen extreme brutality being inflicted upon women and sexual violence being used as a tool. At the same time, the importance of women's empowerment and their participation in conflict resolution, peacebuilding and governance for sustaining peace is also becoming better understood.

Despite the increased focus on the links between women, peace and security, and the evolving normative framework during the past decade and a half, non-combatant women and girls continue to be major victims during armed conflicts. The heinous crimes against humanity perpetrated by terror networks such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham in West Asia, Boko Haram in parts of West Africa or Al-Shabaab in East Africa, especially against women and girls, are stark reminders of the serious challenges that need to be overcome.

Increased institutionalized involvement by women in peacekeeping, conflict prevention and resolution and political processes is important to address this challenge. That requires capacity- and institution-building at the ground level. Therefore, the issue of women, peace and security must be seen in the wider societal context of women's empowerment and longer-term sustainable development.

At the United Nations, the work done by the Commission on the Status of Women, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and other entities continues to push a gender empowerment agenda that can have a transformative impact on societies. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development highlights the interlinkage between sustainable development and peace and security. Also at the United Nations, while there is recognition of the need for greater participation of women in peacekeeping operations, progress remains slow.

In the specific context of United Nations peacekeeping, India has been the lead troop contributor over the past seven decades. While there has been only a marginal increase in the overall number of women peacekeepers, almost a decade ago, in 2007, India deployed the first-ever all-women formed police unit for peacekeeping with the United Nations Mission in Liberia. Prime Minister Modi has committed to a higher representation of Indian female peacekeepers in missions. India has committed to fulfilling the pledge to have women serve in 15 per cent of military observer positions by the end of this year. India has also committed to provide another all-female formed police unit.

Moreover, India has taken the lead in hosting specialized training courses for peacekeepers on sexual violence in armed conflict situations. Among other issues, those courses have focused on the role of women in the context of post-conflict situations. Earlier this year, India hosted the third such specialized course for female military officers, which was organized by the Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping in New Delhi, in partnership with UN-Women. India, the first country to contribute to the Secretary-General's trust fund in support of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse, has continued to contribute to this cause this year.

Prosecution is essential for prevention. The international community has an important role in helping build adequate resources and capacities in that regard. In that context, earlier this year, India contributed to the Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone. The Special Court was among the landmark tribunals that tried and convicted persons for crimes that included the use of child soldiers and forced marriages.

Several key decision-making positions in India are held by distinguished women. They include the Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament and many ministers. More than 1.3 million elected women representatives at the local Government level across India are involved in formulating and implementing gender-sensitive public policies. In international forums, too, India assigns high importance to the role of women. In 1953, the first woman President of the General Assembly was from India.

India remains ready to contribute further internationally, both to the normative and practical aspects, on issues relating to the women and peace and security agenda.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Costa Rica.

Mrs. García Gutiérrez (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the fact that, since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), the women and peace and security agenda has gained significant importance as part of the normative architecture of the United Nations as a crucial component in order to prevent conflict, maintain peace and achieve the Sustainable Development Agenda. It should continue to be included in all areas of the Security Council's work as a priority.

We recognize the various steps taken to improve the implementation of this agenda in various areas. However, the gender balance at the senior management level is desirable and necessary. According to the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/861), to date only 23 per cent of senior peacekeeping posts are held by women. Therefore, the gender parity commitments have not been complied with. We call upon both the permanent and elected members of the Council to unequivocally support the Secretary-General's commitment to achieving gender parity at all levels in the appointments of the United Nations.

It is crucial to include gender and human rights perspectives in various areas of peace and security processes, such as, for example, in commissions of inquiry, in mediation processes and in justice and transition mechanisms. We welcome some efforts in that regard, such as the systematic inclusion of women protection advisers in strategic planning processes for political missions and peacekeeping operations, in the training of experts on the rule of law and sexual violence in conflict and as gender advisers in each commission of investigation of cases of crimes related to cases of sexual violence and abuse. The incidence and widespread use of sexual violence as a tactic of terror and a weapon of war is heartbreaking and unacceptable. Such acts must be punished with full force, while completely eliminating impunity and referring perpetrators to the International Criminal Court. These acts are a crime against humanity.

We commend the efforts of the Secretary-General to reform the Organization's peace and security architecture, in particular the initiative to address sexual exploitation and abuse, with regard to which we reiterate our zero-tolerance policy. Costa Rica joined the voluntary compact on this issue, launched last September, as a way of reiterating our commitment to the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. We also welcome the appointment of a victims' rights advocate and the establishment of a trust fund to support victims.

We stress the need to provide the necessary support to victims and survivors of sexual violence in conflict so that they have the ability to properly reintegrate into their communities in a dignified manner. The economic empowerment of women has a positive effect on post-conflict recovery, and on economic growth in general. We must break the standards of discrimination and guarantee women's access to economic and financial resources, to property, inheritance, health services, including sexual and reproductive health, and to justice and education.

It is also necessary to address the effects of armed violence on women, and in particular recognize the important role that women can play in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. The adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was a historic achievement that included a large number of women's groups and organizations. The leadership of the conference that culminated in the adoption of the Treaty was held by a woman from Costa Rica.

To guarantee equal opportunities and the economic, social and political empowerment of women is an imperative so that women and girls can take on, with all the tools necessary, their essential transformative role in their communities during post-conflict periods.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Romania.

Mr. Jinga (Romania) (*spoke in French*): Since its adoption, resolution 1325 (2000) has become a valuable tool in the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, and in particular for the implementation of the concept of sustaining peace.

Romania associates itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union. I would now like to make a few remarks in my national capacity.

The past 17 years have demonstrated that women are key actors in promoting peace. Nonetheless, only half of the peace agreements concluded contain provisions relating to women. The presence of women in peacekeeping missions has a positive effect on the local female population, allowing women to ensure that they are not only perceived as victims but also as providers of security. They also serve as a model of inspiration for women and girls to play a more active presence in society.

We welcome initiatives by the United Nations since 2015 that have contributed to gender equality and to the increasing role of women. In that regard, Romania greatly appreciates the personal commitment of the Secretary-General. However, more remains to be done. We can see that there is a great need for more women in command-level posts in peacekeeping operations. We appreciate the initiative of the Police Division to launch a training course exclusively for female staff candidates for leadership positions, including within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

Romania is a strong proponent of the integration of women into the troop contingents deployed in United Nations missions, and we are proud that a female Romanian police officer has been awarded the title of International Female Police Peacekeeper for 2015. Currently, another Romanian policewoman occupies the post of Chief of Operations at the United Nations Mission in Liberia.

In implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), the Romanian Ministry of Defence adopted a plan of action to implement the women and peace and security agenda, and currently 40 Romanian military women are involved in United Nations missions or of other international organizations, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Afghanistan, the Balkans and Georgia. It is also important to involve more women in processes related to the promotion of lasting peace. Romania therefore joined the network of women and peace and security national focal points officially launched in New York on 23 September 2016. I would like to add that, on 13 and 14 June 2017, the Romanian Ministry of Defence organized a regional conference in Bucharest on gender mainstreaming in security and defence, and Romania joined the United Kingdom and Peru in an event organized for the opening of the current General Assembly session on the presence of women in peacekeeping operations.

Our representatives also participate in the United Nations Senior Missions Leaders Training Course, which is currently taking place in Dakar and is being organized by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support. Romania is also involved in the Female Military Officers Course, co-organized by UN-Women in Nairobi. Our resolute commitment to realizing women's enormous potential is also reflected in the fact that, on 1 and 2 November, we will organize in Bucharest a conference of the women of the International Organization of La Francophonie.

Building and keeping peace is a ongoing process that requires the broadest possible popular support and the participation of all segments of society, among whom women play an essential role. Romania is resolutely convinced that all the players — States, regional organizations, civil society and the media — should continue to work together for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the observer of the African Union.

Ms. Bailey: On behalf of the African Union, I wish to congratulate and commend the French presidency of the Security Council for convening this open debate. We also wish to thank Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General, for her contribution to this debate. We commend all the briefers for their insightful statements, which highlighted their robust commitment to the global agenda on women and peace and security.

Today's debate is taking place at a pivotal moment, when both the African Union (AU) and the United Nations have embarked on a path of institutional reform to better serve and support Member States in their quest for peace and sustainable development for all. Over the years, Member States have reaffirmed their commitment to advancing the agenda of women and peace and security, yet we continue to see a very limited and disproportionate presence of women in peace processes around the world.

The slow progress witnessed in the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda is fully recognized by His Excellency Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, who at the very outset of his accession to the helm of the African Union Commission pronounced very clearly his commitment and determination to advance the gender agenda on the continent, with a primary objective to have concrete actions and results on the ground that impact the lives of women and girls who, for far too long, have and continued to suffer the brunt of violence and conflict.

Building on the 2014 decision of AU Ministers of Gender that, among other things, called for the creation of an association of women in mediation, at its meeting on 13 March, the African Union Peace and Security Council endorsed modalities for the creation of a Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation, known as FemWise-Africa, which aims to strengthen the role of women in conflict prevention and mediation efforts in the context of the African Union Peace and Security Architecture.

Subsequently, in the spirit of enhancing working relations between the African Union Peace and Security Council and the United Nations Security Council, this Council received a briefing and endorsed the African Union initiative FemWise-Africa in the context of an Arria Formula meeting on 27 March. FemWise-Africa was officially endorsed by the AU Assembly of Heads of State on 4 July.

We strongly believe that FemWise-Africa will be a potent tool to strengthen the role of women in conflict prevention and mediation efforts and will provide a platform for strategic advocacy, capacity-building and networking in order to further enhance the implementation of commitments for women's inclusion in peacemaking in Africa. Key priorities of FemWise-Africa include, among others, ensuring a channel for women's meaningful and effective participation in peace processes, including as heads of official high-level mediation missions, and initiating women's action that will catalyse and mainstream the engagement of women in mediation in line with the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the global Sustainable Development Goals.

As part of the African Union's effort to build partnerships in enhancing the leadership of women while promoting and supporting Africa's transformation agenda with a focus on governance, peace and stability in order to accelerate the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), the African Union Commission and UN-Women, with the support of the Federal Republic of Germany, launched an initiative called the African Women Leaders Network during a high-level women leaders forum for Africa's transformation held at the United Nations from 31 May to 2 June.

At this juncture, Madam President, I wish to thank your delegation for announcing here your Government's support to the African Women Leaders Network. One of the hallmarks of this partnership was the visit undertaken to Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the first solidarity mission under the aegis of the African Women Leaders Network. A group of friends of the African Women Leaders Network will be established in New York and will be headed by Her Excellency Mrs. Martha Pobee, the Permanent Representative of Ghana. The African Women Leaders Network will also be officially launched in Africa in February 2018.

It is often said that there is strength in numbers. The recently signed Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security provides yet another window of opportunity for an enhanced partnership between our institutions to strengthen efforts in advancing the women and peace and security agenda. From that perspective, the African Union commends the Secretary-General and welcomes the establishment of his High-level Advisory Board on Mediation and for appointing three prominent African women leaders, namely Ms. Gbowee, Ms. Machel and Ms. Migiro.

In line with United Nations-AU enhanced partnership, the African Union collaborates with several United Nations offices, particularly UN-Women and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. That robust framework of cooperation reflects our mutual efforts to fully empower women as peace agents and to prevent sexual violence in conflict. In that context, our common objective is to ensure joint advocacy and concrete engagement on the ground. This emphasis on ensuring the participation of women and accountability for crimes of sexual violence is a key aspect of prevention, notably through support to national authorities in order to strengthen their rule-of-law response and institutional configurations to implement the women and peace and security agenda.

Before I conclude, allow me to commend and salute the tradition of holding an annual commemorative meeting on the adoption of the landmark resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions. The African Union Peace and Security Council has adopted a similar approach in its endeavour to resolutely advance the women and peace and security agenda. Accordingly, on 31 October, the African Union Peace and Security Council will hold an open meeting on the theme "The role of women in preventing and countering violent extremism in Africa". The African Union Commission remains a key partner and will continue to mobilize its member States and partners to ensure that the women and peace and security agenda remains central in the implementation of the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the observer of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Mr. Meszaros: Empowering women is not only the right thing to do, but we know that it also leads to more peaceful, just and inclusive societies. It is essential for conflict prevention and it makes peace more sustainable. That is why NATO supports empowering women within our own organization, the armed forces, civilian structures and societies of allies and partners. NATO's current action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and related resolutions have been endorsed not only by the 29 NATO allies, but by a total of 55 nations in all, bringing together the largest political coalition to implement the women and peace and security agenda. NATO aims to maintain that momentum and level of support in 2018, with revised versions of both our policy for implementing resolution 1325 (2000) and our action plan. Much has already been achieved. NATO's military commands and missions have established a network of gender advisers, and the implementation of the action plan is supported at headquarters level by a network of gender focal points. Military guidelines on preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence are being implemented by our strategic commands, and NATO will review progress in 2018 in concert with other international organizations, including the United Nations.

NATO recently updated and approved a strategic command-level directive on gender that includes standards of behaviour and a code of conduct to be upheld by our personnel and NATO-led forces. We are funding research on the role of gender in countering violent extremism, and we have initiated a structured dialogue with civil society through the civil society advisory panel, which held its second meeting in early October in order to contribute to the upcoming revision of our policy for implementing resolution 1325 (2000) and action plan.

Nevertheless, much remains to be done. On the key question of participation, we have seen only a small increase in female representation in the armed forces of member States — an average of 10.9 per cent in 2016, compared to 10.8 per cent in 2015. The average percentage of women in NATO operations for NATO allies was 6.8 per cent in 2016, compared to 6.4 per cent in 2015. We understand that we need to improve those figures, and urge our member States to do their part.

On the leadership side, women hold only 21 per cent of the NATO civilian staff leadership positions. Over the past year we have seen the departure of two out of three of our female four-star officers. Again, we urge NATO member States to play their part to redress the imbalance.

Our work on revising our policy and action plan for 2018 will enable us to highlight the importance of integrating gender perspectives in all our tasks and at all levels. Gender is not only a perspective; it is a tool that contributes and adds value to all of NATO's objectives and core tasks, and it is fundamental to ensuring peace and security for all.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Philippines.

Ms. Andot (Philippines): At the outset, allow me to report to the Security Council that Marawi City, in the southern part of the Philippines, has just been liberated from terrorist forces inspired and aided by the Islamic State terror network, having been captive for the past five months. However, the liberation is no cause for celebration. Marawi City was destroyed by the fighting and 700,000 people have been displaced by the conflict — more than 50 per cent of whom are women and children.

There have been casualties on both sides, as well as within the civilian population. The damage and losses as a result of the conflict are still being assessed, but conservative estimates are between $1 billion and $2 billion. Cognizant of that, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte has declared that the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Marawi City is a Government priority. In fact, as early as June, the President issued Administrative Order No.3, creating the Task Force Bangon Marawi, an inter-agency mechanism that is spearheading the recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction of Marawi City and affected localities.

I am happy to share that our agency, the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, which also serves as the focal point on women and peace and security, sits as one of the members of that Task Force. We are in the process of coming up with a comprehensive rehabilitation plan, informed by a rigorous post-conflict needs assessment and a rapid recovery and peacebuilding assessment, with the help of various stakeholders ranging from community members to national and international partners, such as the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank.

Throughout the process, the Government has been keen to observe conflict-sensitive and peace-promoting approaches, with a particular focus on mainstreaming gender and observing cultural sensitivities in its various interventions. After almost two decades of Government interventions to implement the resolution 1325 (2000) — and its related resolutions — the Philippines is most proud of the three national action plans on women and peace and security that it has delivered. Now in its third cycle for the 2017-2022 implementation period, allow me to briefly share the salient features of our new national action plan on women and peace and security.

At its crafting, the Philippine national action plan on women and peace and security, which incorporates the lessons learned from the previous cycles of implementation, adopts a broader framework to address the situation of women in armed conflict and recognize their contributions to conflict transformation. It primarily aims to embed the language and precepts of gender equality, as provided for in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and, in particular, CEDAW General Recommendation No. 30l with regard to ensuring women's human rights before, during and after various conflict contexts. It also takes into account the context of non-international armed conflicts, such as ethnic and communal violence, states of emergency and internal displacement, and the war against terrorism and organized crime — some of which are situations of concern in the Philippines at present, as exemplified by the Marawi crisis and continuing the pursuit of a final political solution to the Bangsamoro conflict in southern Philippines.

In pursuit of the peace process with rebel groups, significant actions are continuously being taken to ensure the meaningful participation of women, especially Moro and indigenous women, and that their rights are protected in conflict and post-conflict situations.

Filipino women have played a crucial role in responding to the Marawi crisis. For the first time amidst the fighting, the armed gorces of the Philippines and the Philippine national police formed and deployed, on 29 August, a composite all-female civil relations company to Marawi to assist in the implementation of rehabilitation and recovery programmes for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the battle-stricken city. The company was organized, trained and developed with a mission to build a culture of peace and to make every child and young person a peacebuilder. The company is composed of 55 enlisted personnel from the army and 40 non-commissioned police officers. Of its members, 36 are Muslim with 22 from the Maranao tribe. The company is led by four female officers from the army. Their mission is to assist the survivors of the siege, who are currently in evacuation centres and communities and require significant humanitarian and recovery support.

Women-led civil society organizations and local agencies have also channelled their resources in providing psychosocial support for healing the trauma suffered by displaced women and children. We have been training women in the IDP camps on community organizing for livelihood generation, as well as actively engaging them in women and peace conversations.

In a nutshell, the national action plan on women and peace and security serves as the blueprint of the Government and civil society efforts to protect women, prevent violation of their rights and empower them so that they play a decisive role in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Our Department of National Defense and its allied forces, as well as the national police, are part of formulating and implementing that plan and are required to regularly monitor, evaluate and report their commitments and roles within the plan. Those plans will guide the rehabilitation of Marawi. Our Government is committed to protecting the affected population — especially women and children, who are particularly vulnerable, including to trafficking in persons.

Over the past years, the implementation of the national action plan on women and peace and security has seen women helping other women; women leading peace processes and signing and implementing the peace agreements; women being deployed as soldiers at the battlefront defending the civilians from terrorism; and women working as peacekeepers, both here and across borders, to help women and children victims of the conflict.

A training kit on mainstreaming women and peace and security in development planning processes was recently developed and launched by the Philippines with the support of UN-Women. This is an important tool in further localizing the national action plan on women and peace and security and recognizing the role of local Government units in the partnership to protect all women who may be affected by conflicts at the grassroots level.

Peace throughout the land, as well as the rehabilitation of Marawi City, remains a priority for the Philippine Government. This objective enjoys the full support of leaders at the highest level of Government. Sustainable peace and development are the building blocks of AmBisyon Natin 2040, the long-term vision of the Philippines.

While some Filipino women have become victims in the areas affected by conflict, there are also Filipino women who, in one way or another, are continuously inspired by their fellow Filipinas to champion the implementation of gender-sensitive and peace-promoting policies and programmes. Filipino women sit among the high echelons of our Government, including peace panels that are negotiating for and implementing signed agreements. They sit in two Government panels for the implementation of peace agreements with the Moro National Liberation Front and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, respectively.

I would say that Filipinos are demonstrating their resilience now more than ever. As the armed conflict in Marawi draws to a close, we know that our journey to its rehabilitation and recovery has just begun. There is a long way ahead as we build the extrinsic aspect of the city but also, more important, as we mend the torn fabric of Maranaw society. It is in this process that Filipino women — within each basic unit of the Maranaw family as a child, sister, mother and sometimes a father — will play a critical role in the rebuilding of relationships in their respective communities and eventually in Marawi as a whole. In turn, the Philippine Government remains committed to preventing violent extremism and ensuring that such crises will not happen again.

In conclusion, allow me to extend our gratitude to the United Nations, its agencies and Member States for their support in the humanitarian response and peace-based rehabilitation initiatives for Marawi.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Viet Nam.

Mrs. Nguyen (Viet Nam): My delegation would like to thank the French presidency for convening this open debate on women and peace and security. We also express our appreciation to the Secretary-General and to the Executive Director of UN-Women for their comprehensive reports.

Our discussion today under the theme of "Realizing the promise of the women and peace and security agenda: ensuring its full implementation, including the participation of women", is very timely, as there are growing threats to peace and security that are both traditional and non-traditional. This event offers us an opportunity to renew our commitments to the women and peace and security agenda in order to enhance the equal participation and involvement of women in all efforts to maintain and promote peace and security.

We welcome efforts and progress made in the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, which have greatly contributed to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. We are pleased to see that the role and participation of women have been promoted in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction, as well as their growing leadership in peace processes.

Despite those efforts and progress, much remains to be done. Women's underrepresentation, gender inequality and discrimination still persist. We are concerned about the continuing violence and abuse targeting women and girls. We strongly condemn the heinous acts of forcing or recruiting women and girls to commit terrorist attacks.

Against that backdrop, we call for a strengthened collective response to effectively address these challenges. Representation and decision-making by women in post-conflict structures and peace operation efforts should be broadened to ensure that their needs and interests are reflected and met. The gender perspective should be mainstreamed in a consistent and comprehensive manner in all areas of peacebuilding and conflict prevention. Impunity must be ended to effectively combat and eliminate human rights violations, including conflict-related sexual violence and abuse. In that regard, we welcome the global study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and encourage serious consideration of its findings and recommendations.

We would also like to highlight the importance of education in enhancing women's capacity. Together with women's economic empowerment, it is crucial to equip women and girls with the knowledge to better protect themselves from conflict-related risks as well as to build their resilience against economic shocks, climate change and natural disasters. At the same time, we need to raise awareness of the women and peace and security agenda through different means of communication and encourage the engagement of all the relevant stakeholders, especially young people, in its implementation.

Throughout the history of Viet Nam, women have proved and played an indispensable role in national defence, construction and development. Today we are proud to see the increased participation of women in all spheres of life, especially the military and security forces. Women are an essential driving force of our economic and social development, making significant contributions to promoting and maintaining an environment of peace, security and stability.

This year the twelfth National Women's Congress of Viet Nam, under the theme "Solidarity — Renovation — Equality — Integration", set its objectives for the term 2017-2022. These include, inter alia, the promotion of women's potential and creativity, improving their material and spiritual life and status, striving for gender equality and women's advancement and contributing to the cause of national construction and defence.

We are also pleased to announce that we are now working closely with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in preparation for the early deployment of the very first Vietnamese woman officer to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan. Another nine women are prepared to work at our level 2 hospital once it is deployed in South Sudan.

It is women who plant the seeds and inspire the love for peace. For the seeds of peace to grow and the love of peace to be nurtured, we must turn our commitments into actions. It is necessary to mobilize greater support for the role of women, increase opportunities for their meaningful participation and tackle all challenges that stand in their way. Viet Nam is committed to working closely with Member States and the relevant United Nations agencies in this endeavour.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Kuwait.

Mr. AlMunayekh (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the French presidency for convening this important debate. I would also like to thank Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General, and Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN-Women, as well as Ms. Charo Mina-Rojas and Ms. Michaëlle Jean, for their important briefings.

The women and peace and security agenda has become a key pillar of international relations and a crucial took for strengthening United Nations efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts and to provide humanitarian assistance. This agenda allows us to fulfil two essential conditions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Seventeen years have passed since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000). In adopting it, the international community reaffirmed the important role of women in preventing and resolving conflict. I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm my country's commitment to the principles set out therein. My country is firmly convinced that gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as the protection and promotion of women's rights, are important elements in sustainable development and conflict prevention.

The meaningful participation of women in resolving conflicts, in humanitarian efforts and in peacebuilding are crucial to sustaining peace. In this regard, I would like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his annual report on the implementation of resolutions 1325 (2000) and 2122 (2013), on women and peace and security (S/2017/861). The report highlights recent developments in the implementation of resolution 2242 (2015) by focusing on the contributions that women can make in terms of implementation. We also welcome the recommendations contained in the report, as gender equality and women's empowerment are sine qua non prerequisites for conflict prevention and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 16, as outlined in the report. This will allow us to effect genuine change in the context of the three pillars of the United Nations, security, human rights and development.

My country is committed to involving women in development plans, decision-making and civil society. Moreover, women in Kuwait participate in decision-making at the highest levels and occupy high-level posts. They are ministers, deputy ministers, members of parliament, and ambassadors and representatives in diplomatic missions worldwide. We call for further efforts to be made for women's empowerment and their inclusion in society.

We have also undertaken efforts to promote the role of the United Nations, and, in cooperation with the Organization, we have developed a number of projects for women's empowerment. We have also reviewed and updated all legislation relating to women in Kuwait. Thus we have put an end to all forms of discrimination against women and established a mechanism to protect women from all forms of violence, both in society and within the family, and established a national centre for that purpose.

The eight resolutions adopted by the Security Council in this area have made clear that this agenda requires greater commitment in order to be comprehensively implemented. We will undertake additional efforts to integrate these resolutions in the global agenda of the United Nations and in the work of the Security Council in particular. The past two decades have made clear that the meaningful participation of women can strengthen protection, economic recovery and peacebuilding efforts.

To conclude, I would like to reiterate Kuwait's commitment to acting in favour of women's empowerment and promoting the role of women in sustaining peace and security. Participation by women and girls must be at the top of our priorities.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Al Mazrui (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I wish to thank France for having convening this open debate on women and peace and security. We join others in thanking the Secretary-General's Chef de Cabinet and the Executive Director of UN-Women. We pledge our continued support to UN-Women for its role in advancing this agenda.

Two years have passed since we marked the 15-year anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000). The Security Council also unanimously adopted resolution 2242 (2015), which was co-sponsored by the United Arab Emirates. As a sponsor of the resolution and a strong advocate of the women and peace and security agenda, the United Arab Emirates is committed to building a strong framework for action to realize the full implementation of this agenda.

Since 2015, the United Nations has taken important steps to implement this agenda. The Security Council established the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security and launched the Women, Peace and Security National Focal Points Network, of which the United Arab Emirates is a founding member. The Network is responsible for coordinating and implementing the women and peace and security agenda at the national level. However, such implementation remains a challenge owing to a number of threats, including the rise of terrorism and violent extremism and the targeting of women and girls in conflict zones, as well as the protracted nature of the displacement crisis.

The United Arab Emirates recognizes the range of challenges that prevent the full implementation of this agenda, and we are doing our part in preventing conflict and promoting sustainable peace, which are critical to the implementation of Agenda 2030.

We have focused on the protection and empowerment as women as one of the three key pillars of our external assistance strategy. Respect for the rights of women and girls underpins every aspect of our country's approach to this global response. The United Arab Emirates considers its partnership with UN-Women a key part of its strategy to implement the women and peace and security agenda. Accordingly, the United Arab Emirates has supported UN-Women since its inception. In this regard, I would like to announce that we have contributed $15 million to support its critical work over the next three years.

As a result of this strong partnership and under the leadership of Her Highness Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, Chairwoman of the General Women's Union, Supreme Chairwoman of the Family Development Foundation and President of the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood, the United Arab Emirates and UN-Women launched a liaison office in Abu Dhabi that will enhance and strengthen collaboration so as to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as a core part of the women and peace and security agenda in the region.

The UAE also recognizes that a strong research base is required so that our policies can be data-driven and effective. That is why our country contributes to this research base by supporting UN-Women's global programme on women and peace and security in order to promote conflict-resilient societies through prevention efforts. This global programme has furthered gender-sensitive research and data collection and revealed the drivers of extremism and the impact of counter-terrorism strategies on women's rights and women's organizations.

The United Arab Emirates is aware of the need to strengthen the capacity of Governments to address accountability for conflict-related sexual violence. That is why the United Arab Emirates has supported the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict in the development and implementation of an action plan on conflict-related sexual violence as well as in the establishment of prevention and response mechanisms in Somalia, of which accountability is a central element.

In closing, the United Arab Emirates recognizes that the international community will achieve sustainable peace only by placing women's participation at the core of our global peace and security efforts. We will continue to advocate for the full, effective and meaningful participation of women in all aspects of senior leadership and decision-making, and we will work towards the effective implementation of the women and peace and security agenda.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Armenia.

Mr. Mnatsakanyan (Armenia): I wish to thank you very much, Madam President, for having initiated the present open debate and providing an excellent concept note (S/2017/889, annex). We thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his comprehensive report of 16 October (S/2017/861), and we recognize and support the consistency of the policy recommendations and conclusions contained in the report with the overall priorities and reform agenda of the Secretary-General.

At such an important stocktaking open debate of the Security Council on the past 17 years of the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda of the United Nations, Armenia reiterates its full commitment to the resolute pursuit of such a transformative agenda and the consistent strengthening of the link between the empowerment of women and the sustainability of peace and development at the national, regional and international levels. At the national level, the implementation of our strategic action plan on gender policy and on combating gender-based violence is a continuous works in progress.

Shortly, my Government will be presenting to the Parliament a draft law on the prevention of domestic violence and the protection of victims. Our national laws and provisions of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men and identifying and assisting victims of trafficking and human exploitation, as well as numerous other legal and normative acts, remain important instruments for the promotion of gender equality and the protection of the rights of women. Gender equality and the empowerment of women received considerable prominence in Armenia's overall national strategy and action plan for the promotion and protection of human rights.

Following the adoption of a new Constitution in 2015 and the new electoral code in 2016, the quota for women's representation in elected bodies has been raised to 25 per cent from 20 per cent. There is an aim to gradually increase that figure to 30 per cent by 2021. Presently, the representation of women in our national Parliament stands at nearly 20 per cent, which is a considerable increase from the previous level of 11 per cent. Promoting gender balance in the judiciary represents another important priority for Armenia. As a result of the implementation of our respective national action plan, the number of female judges has reached 25 per cent.

The empowerment of women and the promotion of their rights represent an important agenda in Armenia's work within regional and international bodies. Presently, the Government is considering modalities for setting up a working group for the implementation of Armenia's international commitments, including those stemming from the national report on Beijing + 20 and its concluding observations. Furthermore, domestic procedures have been launched to sign the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

I am also glad to inform the Council about the setting up of an inter-agency working group for the elaboration of a national action plan on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), with a view to its adoption in 2018. In 2015 and 2016, the Minister of Defence of Armenia, in collaboration with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the United Nations Population Fund, initiated and conducted workshops on the national implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). The publication in 2016 of a reference book on women and the army, as well as the elaboration of a concept note and a draft action plan that is to be approved soon by the Minister of Defence concerning women's rights and equal opportunities in the field of defence, are important building blocks in Armenia's national efforts for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

In all of our work, the Government of Armenia relies heavily on the strong engagement, cooperation and contributions of its very vibrant civil society organizations, particularly those dealing with issues of women. We strongly commend and thank our civil society activists for their important work and commitment.

We support the Secretary-General's observations about the need to elevate the women and peace and security agenda to systemic, large-scale, transformative programmes and approaches to preventing conflict and sustaining peace. Overall, that resonates strongly with the Secretary-General's concept of placing prevention at the heart of the actions of the United Nations — a concept that we support. In that respect, the empowerment of women, the promotion and protection of women's rights in general and, in particular, the women and peace and security agenda should not be viewed as a standalone agenda. Rather, it should be firmly viewed as an indispensable and integral part of the broader objective of securing durable solutions to crisis situations and addressing the root causes of violence and conflicts. Gender-based vulnerability often represents an exacerbating factor in targeting groups on the grounds of their broader identities, such as, for example, national, ethnic, religious or racial identities. The reinforced emphasis on the promotion and protection of all human rights, the strengthening of national institutions to that end and reinforced international corporation to promote the human rights agenda remain significant objectives, both at national and international levels.

In conclusion, Armenia particularly underlines the role of women in establishing an environment conducive to the peaceful resolution of conflicts and promoting confidence-building among conflicting parties. We recognize the significance of the role of civil society organizations, in particular women-led organizations, for that purpose. Armenia consistently emphasizes the importance of dialogue and confidence-building in the context of the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. However, meaningful effort to promote such dialogue and confidence-building measures is considerably undermined by persistently flaring hate speech, intolerance, xenophobia and ethnic profiling of Armenians. The glorification of hate crimes, especially encouraged by the political leadership in the neighbouring States, as well as violence and the imprisonment of human rights defenders, including women.

Armenia remains firmly committed to the peace process and reiterates its deep appreciation for the support of the international community, of the Council and of the Secretary-General for the efforts of the co-Chairs of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. In the context of the present debate, we recognize and underline the significant role of women as catalysts for sustainable peace.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Trinidad and Tobago.

Ms. Beckles (Trinidad and Tobago): Trinidad and Tobago is pleased to uphold its tradition of participating in this annual open debate on the important topic of women and peace and security. Trinidad and Tobago recognizes the competence of the Security Council under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations in matters related to the maintenance of international peace and security, and wishes to express its satisfaction regarding the fact that the issue of women and peace and security remains prominent on the agenda of the Council.

My delegation also welcomes the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/861) on the subject. We concur with the Secretary-General in his report that the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals requires the full implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. For my country, the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women remain pivotal to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Seventeen years ago, resolution 1325 (2000) was adopted by the Security Council. Trinidad and Tobago remains steadfast in its view that the seminal character of that resolution cannot be overemphasized, as it was the first resolution to recognize the need for the involvement of both women and men in efforts to attain sustainable peace and security. Similarly, we recognize the distinctive nature of subsequent resolutions on sustaining peace and the importance of women's leadership and meaningful participation in the prevention and resolution of conflict and in peacebuilding, as embodied in subsequent resolutions on sustaining peace. Our support for those resolutions is not only based on our legal obligations under the Charter, but also on our own national laws, which have entrenched the inalienable rights of women into our domestic legal framework.

Trinidad and Tobago subscribes to the rule of law as a fundamental safeguard in the advancement and protection of the rights of women. Therefore, we view as essential our continued adherence to obligations from a number of international instruments that seek to protect the rights of women and girls, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The vulnerability of women and girls in situations of armed conflict and, in my country's specific circumstances, armed violence, continue to engage our attention. Trinidad and Tobago remains a strong proponent of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). We submit that the ATT represents a significant achievement in the global fight to eliminate the diversion of conventional arms to the illicit market. It could contribute to the reduction of, if not an end to, untold suffering, particularly to women and girls.

In the spirit of advancing the dual agenda of the attainment of international peace and security and the empowerment of women, in 2010, Trinidad and Tobago introduced General Assembly resolution 65/69, which was the first General Assembly resolution on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. It is our view that that resolution complements resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions on the matter by focusing on the participation of women in processes geared towards the advancement of disarmament and international peace and security.

As a current member of the Executive Board of UN-Women, Trinidad and Tobago pledges to continue to work with Member States towards the universal achievement of gender equality. We recognize UN-Women's strategic plan for the period 2018-2021 as an important instrument that could help to achieve that objective.

In conclusion, Trinidad and Tobago would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to the advancement and empowerment of women. We remain committed to working with other Member States and our partners at the regional, hemispheric and global levels to promote the involvement of women as equal partners in matters related to peace and security, including at all levels of the decision-making process.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Rwanda.

Ms. Bakuramutsa (Rwanda) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to thank the French presidency for convening today's important debate.

(*spoke in English*)

We are also grateful to all the briefers this morning for their insightful remarks.

It has been almost exactly 17 years to the day since the international community recognized the urgent importance of mainstreaming a gender perspective into peacekeeping and multidimensional peace support operations. On this anniversary, we must take stock of the progress we have been able to make and of what still remains for us to accomplish, individually and collectively. My delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's efforts to mainstream this agenda within the ongoing reforms of the United Nations peace and security architecture and recognize the collaborative advantage that it will confer on the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security.

The participation of women in peace and security is not only the right thing to do but also the smart thing to do, as it is a proven fact that when women are involved in conflict prevention and efforts to achieve unity and reconciliation, as well as peacebuilding, sustainable outcomes are achieved. Women contribute added value in addressing especially critical issues, such as protecting children's rights, combating gender-based violence and promoting human rights.

After listening to the briefers for today's debate, it is clear that blocking women's rights and empowerment has direct negative effects on society as a whole. During the genocide in Rwanda against the Tutsi, rape and other forms of violence were primarily directed at women not just to degrade them individually but also to strip the humanity from the larger community of which they were a part. As situations of armed conflict and violent extremism continue to prevail in many parts of the world, with women and children bearing the primary burden, we must work steadfastly to empower women and encourage their participation in the entire spectrum of peace processes and in the promotion of the rule of law, good governance and mediation.

As a regional initiative, the East African Community, in collaboration with the African Union, has developed a regional implementation framework to enhance women's leadership in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and mainstreaming gender in security policymaking, and to ensure that women's rights are protected in humanitarian crises, transitional contexts and post-conflict situations. It is important to note that the action plan also ensures that activities related to women and peace and security are not seen as stand-alone efforts but rather as an integral part of regional peace and security discussions that are in line with promoting gender equality.

Nationally, the Government of Rwanda, bringing to bear strong political will, has made great strides in empowering women to fully participate in all sectors and fields, an approach complemented by the fact that private-sector, civil-society, religious and non-governmental organizations are also taking ownership of the part they play in the empowerment and advancement of women. In addition, we have adopted a national action plan in order to fast-track existing national mechanisms and frameworks for implementing resolution 1325 (2000). The plan is based on two pillars, the first being that of promoting the equal participation of women and men in all peace initiatives at all levels, and the second of integrating gender perspectives into peace and security efforts.

Individually and collectively, we have a long way to go, but we can achieve the meaningful and long-term changes we seek if we continue to put women at the centre of our agenda. In conclusion, Rwanda stands ready to work with Member States, the Secretary-General and the United Nations as a whole, particularly UN-Women, to make this agenda a success.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Portugal.

Mrs. Pucarinho (Portugal): I would like to thank the French presidency for convening today's open debate, and the briefers for their very comprehensive presentations this morning.

I fully align my statement with the statement delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union.

Portugal is encouraged by several very positive developments with regard to the women and peace and security agenda. This subject matter has become a consistent feature in Security Council resolutions and peacekeeping mandates, and gender-sensitive reporting is now a fundamental element in any comprehensive understanding of a given situation. We are also pleased to note that nowadays more women are taking part in peace talks, more peace agreements contain provisions in support of women's human rights, and more security-sector personnel are trained to prevent and properly respond to sexual and gender-based violence.

Portugal also welcomes other important kinds of progress at the multilateral, regional and national levels, including the African Union and NATO's appointment of special envoys for women and peace and security and the increasing number of countries that have adopted national action plans for implementing resolution 1325 (2000) and the related resolutions that have followed. However, since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), the context of peace and security and the nature of conflict have evolved, sometimes very dramatically. We are currently confronted with entrenched cycles of conflict and fragility, daily violations of human rights and humanitarian law, growing humanitarian crises and the mass-scale displacement of people and refugees, along with new threats, including the increase in violent extremism and terrorism, that affect women and girls in particular.

We understand that the women and peace and security agenda is a critical yet still underutilized tool for preventing conflict and shaping more effective responses to complex crises. That is why it is so essential to consistently build on the progress already achieved and scale up the commitment to this agenda.

Portugal has been a firm and consistent supporter of the women and peace and security agenda, as we consider it to be critical to ensuring the active and meaningful participation of women and girls in all aspects and stages of conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict processes. It is an agenda of fairness and inclusivity that has been shown to contribute positively to the achievement of sustainable peace, besides offering multiple cross-cutting benefits, including strengthening United Nations peacekeepers' protection efforts.

In 2009, Portugal adopted its first national action plan on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). A second plan, adopted in 2014, will be in force until next year. We have remained consistently committed to promoting the women and peace and security agenda and raising awareness of the importance of establishing and fully implementing national action plans for resolution 1325 (2000) in all relevant international forums, including the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and NATO. We reiterate our pledge to continue conducting training programmes on gender equality and violence against women and girls, including sexual violence, gender-based violence and trafficking in human beings, for national personnel and members of the armed and security forces assigned to international peacekeeping missions.

Portugal fully supports the Secretary-General's policy of zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse, and highly welcomed his initiative to organize the high-level meeting on that topic in September. Portugal took part in the high-level event, has signed the voluntary compact to end impunity and strengthen measures to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, joined the Circle of Leadership and contributed to the United Nations Trust Fund for victims of sexual exploitation and abuse.

To conclude, 17 years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), we realize that much has been achieved, but also that we have a long way ahead, with no end in sight, to definitively ensure the gender perspective and women and girl's participation in all stages of peace processes, including in prevention and disarmament, protection in displacement settings, peacekeeping, policymaking and reconstruction. No concrete effort should be spared to move forward and advance this meaningful agenda. Portugal is complying at the national level and stands ready to extend his cooperation at the bilateral and international levels to promote the women and peace and security agenda.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Thailand.

Mr. Plasai (Thailand) (*spoke in French*): I thank the French presidency for having organized this important open debate.

Since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) 17 years ago, the women and peace and security agenda has increasingly been recognized as a main pillar of maintaining global peace and security. However, in term of implementation, women's role and participation in this area in all capacities remain low and fragmented. On the positive side, we note that in addition to resolution 1325 (2000) and the other seven Security Council resolutions on the women and peace and security agenda, there are a number of newly established frameworks to push forward this agenda, such as the informal expert group on women and peace and security, and the Women, Peace and Security National Focal Points Network.

The Kingdom of Thailand believes that it is the responsibility of the international community as a whole to strengthen the implementation of this agenda. In so doing, we must find ways to further promote gender equality and women's rights, while increasing the number of women in peace and security leadership positions.

On our part, in 2016 Thailand adopted national measures and guidelines on women and peace and security that encompass the aspects of prevention, protection, capacity-building and empowerment. This document emphasizes the significant role of women in addressing political and social conflicts at the domestic and international levels. The national economic and social development plan of Thailand also underlines the concept of women's rights, as enshrined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

We strongly believe that women can play an important role in and increase the efficiency of peacekeeping operations, and has worked increase their participation. Among the Thai military and police personnel now serving in the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan, and the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, 24 per cent are women. We also believe that Member States can and must do more to improve the global level of female participation in peacekeeping, which now stands at fewer than 4 per cent of all Blue Helmets, and in conflict prevention and resolution. According to UN-Women, between 1992 and 2011 only 4 per cent of signatories to peace agreements and fewer than 10 per cent of peace negotiators were women.

To address that deficit, we must first ensure that the women and and peace security agenda is mainstreamed across the entire spectrum of the work of the United Nations. Secondly, in our work we need to constantly remind ourselves that women are not just victims but rather effective agent of change. Mechanisms and programmes should be created to increase their meaningful participation in various sectors of the United Nations. Thirdly, the rhetoric must go beyond promoting the role of women in merely providing a sense of security to other women and children, as we need to stop perpetuating the stereotyped views of women as gentle pacifiers. In addition, more efforts must be made in all countries, including Thailand, with regard to increasing the role and the number of women engaged in national and local politics, particularly in the political decision-making processes.

I concur with the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/861) that an inclusive process and women's meaningful participation in peace and security must be the norm, not the exception. Thailand is committed to continuing to do our part at home and stands ready to work with others to genuinely advance this important agenda.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Saudi Arabia.

Ms. Radwan (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank France for convening this important open debate on women and peace and security.

I also thank Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti for her valuable briefing, and the other briefers for their important comments and remarks.

We celebrate today the seventeenth anniversary of the adoption of the women and peace and security agenda, which has become an important pillar in conflict prevention and resolution, humanitarian action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Despite the international consensus on the vital role of women in peace, security, human rights and development, States and organizations still have a long way to go in order to achieve these goals. We therefore need to redouble our efforts to address the root causes of the challenges that confront women and undermine their rights. In this regard, and in the interests of time, I would like to focus on three main challenges.

First, occupation represents one of the main obstacles to women's advancement and is the most heinous violation of rights, freedoms and international norms. Every day, Palestinian and Arab women suffer under the Israeli occupation, which commits all forms of violence, including sexual violence, arbitrary detention, physical and psychological torture, amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Secondly, we note the increasing violence in conflict zones and the growing threat posed by non-State actors, sectarian militias and terrorist groups. Atrocities are being committed on a daily basis against civilians, women in particular, by the Syrian regime, Iranian sectarian militias, the terrorist Hizbullah militia, Houthi militias, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Al-Qaeda and Boko Haram in Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia and elsewhere.

Thirdly, we see the spread of violent extremist discourse against Muslims and Islam, including women. Women are oppressed even in countries that call for democracy and religious and personal freedoms. These countries enact laws that limit the freedom of women, including their religious freedom, and prevent them from participating in public life merely because of the way they look. All of these practices run counter to our goal of empowering women and respecting their religious and ideological freedom. All of these challenges adversely affect economic and social development and undermine the well-being and prosperity of women and society.

In order to address these challenges, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia calls on the Security Council and other United Nations entities overseeing the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda to confront these challenges comprehensively and consistently, end occupation and colonization, and refrain from supporting oppressive sectarian regimes and sectarian militias. We should all combat extremist discourse against Islam and Muslims and ensure the comprehensive development of all nations. Most importantly, we should seek to ensure the active participation of women in all of these efforts and refrain from controlling their religious and cultural choices.

The advancement of women has been a priority for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. We are focused on women's education at all levels, which helps to ensure their access to the private and public sectors. Women in Saudi Arabia have proven themselves. They have been able to become members of the Shura Council and have participated in municipal elections as candidates and voters. They have become diplomats and occupy a number of leadership positions. Women have also been a focus of our development efforts, including the 2030 Vision of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which the Kingdom launched in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The achievements of Saudi women have been many, and I cannot enumerate them all. They have made great inroads in the fields of science, technology, medicine, business, humanitarian action, pilgrim services and other scientific, social and economic activities. All of these achievements are the results of our arduous efforts and of the attention we accord to women's empowerment.

I note that this success has not happened in a vacuum. Women have played a pioneering role in Muslim and Arab history. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is making great strides in order to ensure the advancement of women and their empowerment, based on our belief that addressing the root causes of women's exclusion and marginalization is our religious, national and development duty.

Thanks to the courageous and wise leadership of my country, women in Saudi Arabia are allowed to dream. We promise that the next stage will allow women to take part in all walks of life. This is based on the principles of moderate Islam, which has given women the status they deserve and guarantees their dignity and rights, far removed from extremist discourse that has nothing to do with our principles or our way of life.

Our achievements are many, but we still have a long way to go. Saudi women have been a model of patience, dedication and devotion. Today, women in Saudi Arabia are allowed to dream and to lead in favour of peace, security and well-being, not only in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the region but also throughout the world. These are not empty promises. They are part of an action plan that my country has launched and is determined to see through to the end.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

Mr. Saikal (Afghanistan): Let me thank the Mission of France for convening this meeting on women and peace and security.

We also thank all speakers who have made strong, positive references to Afghanistan's progress with women in general. However, there is no place for complacency. We remain steadfast in our resolve to improve the lives of half of our population.

The role of women is inextricable from the promotion of peace and security worldwide. Experience has also shown that the full involvement and participation of women are not only desirable but absolutely necessary to the advancement of society, as well to preventing and resolving conflicts. Today's meeting is of particular importance to my country, Afghanistan, which has seen decades of imposed conflict, including terrorism and violence extreme, all of which has left our institutions and social fabric in a shambles.

Afghan women have borne the disproportionate burden of violence and suffering for a long period of time. Their basic rights and fundamental freedoms were completely denied under Taliban rule, as they had no access to education, health care or employment.

Needless to say, the plight of Afghan women has seen profound improvements since the fall of the Taliban regime, which marked the start of a new era in our modern history. Since 2001, we have seen tremendous progress across all spectrums of society. Today, the National Unity Government is consolidating the gains of recent years. Women's equality in all spheres remains an important national priority, as we are committed to furthering women's participation and role in all stages of decision-making, particularly in relation to peace and security issues.

Our commitment to women's empowerment is embedded in our firm resolve to meet our pledges within the framework of our national and international obligations, including the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the international treaties to which we are party. To that end, the Government of Afghanistan is sparing no effort to meet the goals of resolution 1325 (2000). The Afghanistan national action plan on women and peace and security remains the overarching framework for implementing that hallmark resolution. A key component of our strategy relates to ensuring women's participation in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts, as well as other matters related to peace and security.

Ending the cycle of terror, violence and conflict in Afghanistan is the surest way to protect and promote the rights of all our citizens, particularly women. In this respect, women are front and centre in our national peace process as members of the High Peace Council and civil society, as human rights advocates, and as members of Parliament and Government. Accordingly, the participation of women in peacebuilding efforts is recognized as a prerequisite for peace and reconstruction across the country. In the broader context, there is a common acknowledgement that durable peace and stability in Afghanistan require the participation of women in every aspect of society, be it social, political or economic.

The national action plan for the women of Afghanistan, spanning the years 2008 to 2018, commits the Afghan Government to increasing women's representation in the civil service to 30 per cent. The Ministries of the Interior and National Defence have committed to increasing women's representation in those institutions by 20 per cent over the next 10 years. Furthermore, my delegation is pleased to report that at present more than 3,000 female armed-service members and police officers are proudly serving in our national security forces in order to protect our citizens, combat international terrorism and preserve law and order. In the economic domain, the launch of our national programme for women's economic empowerment has marked another important step forward in the advancement of women. It has supported 67,000 women in agricultural activities and empowered 35,000 in the livestock sector, and it is also recruiting 3,000 female teachers and 900 community midwives and nurses.

Physical protection from any form of violence constitutes an integral component of our national efforts to empower women. A number of national structures have been established to enforce constitutional and legislative provisions to protect women. They include the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, commissions in Kabul and the provinces for the elimination of violence against women, the creation of the post of Deputy Attorney-General for the Elimination of Violence against Women and a commission on the elimination of sexual abuse of women and children. Those structures are integral to the Government's promotion and protection of women's rights and to the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

Amid all our gains, we realize how vital it is to continue sustaining and enhancing progress on women's empowerment on all fronts. We can say with confidence that Afghanistan has entered a new phase in its journey to transform the role of women into a powerful force of change, while contributing to the vision of a self-reliant nation that stands in lasting peace, tranquillity and stability. We are confident in our success, but the support of the international community continues to be crucially important to realizing that vision. We would like to take this opportunity to express our consciousness of the deep debt of gratitude we owe to all the friends and partners that continue to make an important contribution to our efforts. We look forward to continuing our collaboration in order to elevate our progress in the protection and empowerment of Afghan women to new heights.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Ecuador.

Ms. Yánez Loza (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation thanks France for convening today's open debate on an issue of increasing importance to the Organization. I believe it is important for all of us here in the Security Council to draw the international community's attention to the need to periodically revisit the issue of the role of women in the area of peace and security. They are simultaneously the victims of conflicts, participants in fulfilling peacekeeping operations' mandates and society's peacebuilders.

Ecuador welcomes the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/861), the concept note (S/2017/889, annex) provided to guide our work and the important briefings we heard today. We agree on the ever-present and genuine need to work to achieve gender equality, the empowerment of women and the protection of their rights, and to raise awareness about the risks they face, including all forms of sexual and gender-based violence. Conflict prevention and resolution, post-conflict reconstruction and lasting peace can be fully achieved only if those intrinsic goals are duly taken into consideration.

In that regard, my delegation welcomes the mechanisms that have been established to include a gender perspective in peacekeeping and peacebuilding processes. Gender-based violence and sexual violence in conflict situations will always be unacceptable, which is why it is important for those responsible for such crimes to be held accountable. Support mechanisms must therefore be established for victims, as well as ongoing educational processes for societies. For many, the face of the United Nations is its peacekeeping operations. Every effort must be made to end the cases of sexual abuse and exploitation in those operations for good, as such abuses undermine the Organization's credibility.

The current national challenges in the area of women's participation and leadership are not the result of a lack of legislation, public policies or administrative structures, but rather of the lack of implementation of such laws, policies and structures. That is because mindsets still have to be changed, and that must be done every day. If change is to be permanent, our inclusion efforts must be ongoing and meaningful, but that is a slow process in which we have to contend with glass ceilings, broken ladders and sticky floors. Planning, regularly submitting reports and disaggregating statistics are therefore all-important. In addition, the cross-cutting nature of gender equality increasingly demonstrates the interrelated nature of the various forums and the need to work assiduously to assess the outcome of today's meeting.

In conclusion, I would like to underscore that, starting this year, Ecuador has three women in its infantry unit serving as peacekeeping operations observers. We trust that that will be the start of an ongoing and growing participation that can be extended to other branches of our armed forces and police force, as yet another sign that my country is committed to the ideals of peace and security on which the Organization is based.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Nigeria.

Mr. Ademola Ogunnaike (Nigeria): I thank the delegation of France for organizing today's open debate on women and peace and security. I would also like to commend Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General, for her briefing. Nigeria welcomes the presence at today's debate of Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN-Women, and of the representative of non-governmental organizations. We listened attentively to all the briefings and have taken note of the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/861), which provides an update on the progress that has been made across all areas of the women and peace and security agenda, as well as highlighting gaps and challenges.

Undoubtedly, respect for women's rights and interests, as well as their protection, is not only a mark of progress in human civilization but is also closely related to the attainment of world peace and development. Nigeria therefore welcomes this opportunity to reflect on the progress made on the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, 17 years after the adoption of the landmark resolution 1325 (2000). While we acknowledge the substantial achievements that have been made in that endeavour, however, there are still challenges and significant gaps to be addressed. The international community should therefore go beyond protecting women's safety and upholding their rights and interests in conflict and post-conflict situations, and dedicate greater collective efforts to ensuring their active participation in peace processes. We believe that today's debate can help to determine potential solutions for addressing the prevailing challenges and gaps, and offer suggestions for acquiring the resources needed to advance the role of women within the context of the global peace and security architecture.

Meeting those challenges will be critical to making the progress we need on the women and peace and security agenda. It requires a multi-stakeholder approach involving all actors at the global, regional, subregional and national levels. Communities, civil society and individuals also have crucial roles to play. In order to promote women so that they can truly take ownership of their peacekeeping roles and play an important part in peacebuilding processes, the various United Nations bodies and entities will need to work in accordance with their respective mandates, with a clear division of labour on the one hand, and complementarity on the other.

We are also convinced that national Governments have the primary responsibility to protect women's safety, rights and interests. The international community should therefore support countries by providing constructive assistance, with their consent. However, such support should be consistent with national priorities and focus on capacity-building. There is also the urgent need to step up assistance aimed at supporting the countries concerned with their specific financial and technical difficulties.

In our region, the African Union has provided a useful platform for the advancement of the women and peace and security agenda. It should be noted that Agenda 2063 of the African Union, which was adopted by African Heads of State and Government in Addis Ababa in January 2016, places particular emphasis on the engagement of women and youth in the continent's development.

At the subregional level, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has been a major driver of the women and peace and security agenda. In collaboration with the United Nations Office for West Africa, ECOWAS developed an integrated plan of action for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) in September 2010. The plan of action emphasizes the importance of the role of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, mediation and peacebuilding, as well as the rebuilding of post-conflict societies.

Consistent with subregional efforts, Nigeria launched a national action plan to fully implement the relevant provisions of resolution 1325 (2000). Indeed, the second national action plan has expanded the concept of security to cover the use of violent extremism, trauma and healing, disarmament and demobilization, and subject them to further localization. The plan reflects the Federal Government's commitment to ensuring the security of women and girls during armed conflict and to enhancing their active and direct participation in conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

I wish to state that there is ongoing collaboration with our neighbours Chad, Cameroon, the Niger and Benin, within the framework of the Multinational Joint Task Force, to fight Boko Haram, whose activities have targeted women and girls. Our experience today is evidence that, with determined international collaboration, terrorism can be defeated. The sustained efforts by Nigeria and its international partners have culminated in the liberation of four territories previously occupied by Boko Haram.

It should be noted that 80 per cent of the 2 million internally displaced persons in north-eastern Nigeria are women. We have taken concrete steps to address their humanitarian needs and to ensure that the necessary conditions are established for enabling the voluntary return of the displaced persons to their homes safely and with dignity. The Nigerian Government is working around the clock to ensure the release of the remaining Chibok girls and other persons in Boko Haram captivity.

We believe that the effective participation of women is an important foundation for realizing sustainable peace and social stability. Women should naturally become important participants in conflict prevention and mediation. They should enjoy adequate rights and be allowed to participate in the decision-making process, making contributions to post-conflict arrangements, peacebuilding and national development. Indeed, women's development is the foundation for truly realizing their empowerment. The international community should make deliberate efforts to promote the socioeconomic development of women, thereby enhancing their capacity to make positive contributions to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Nigeria remains fully and firmly committed to the promotion and protection of the rights of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations. We shall work assiduously to enhance the participation of women in peace and security initiatives. We are determined to reinforce and implement the principles of resolution 1325 (2000) and, within that context, to address the factors that impact negatively on the lives of women and girls.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Djibouti.

Mrs. Hassan (Djibouti) (*spoke in French*): My delegation thanks the French presidency of the Security Council for convening this debate on women and peace and security, as well as for the excellent quality of the accompanying concept note (S/2017/889, annex), which highlights the relevance and importance of this issue on the agenda of the Security Council and the General Assembly as we implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We also welcome the excellent report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/861) and thank Ms. Jean, Secretary-General of the International Organization of la Francophonie, and Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN-Women, for the quality of their briefings.

Since 2000, some eight Security Council resolutions have substantively contributed to the progressive enrichment of the legal and institutional framework dealing with the issue before us, while also being translated into closer institutional links among peace and security, development and human rights bodies.

In times of conflict, the security situation on the ground deteriorates significantly and takes a heavy toll in human lives. Civilians are the primary victims of such wars, and their lives are in jeopardy on a daily basis. It is obviously no coincidence that women always pay the highest price. Day after day, if nothing is done, their lives become a never-ending string of misfortunes, accompanied by a lack of access to water, health care and adequate food. Any hope of a quiet and peaceful life is obliterated, and they face abject poverty, pain and misfortune as they gradually become deprived of any means of subsistence. Indeed, the resulting insecurity takes a high toll on their daily lives, filling them with despair and making their future increasingly uncertain. The precarious security environment creates a fertile breeding ground for terror and terrorism.

Much progress has been made under the women and peace and security agenda, but much remains to be done. We note with satisfaction that the framework of preventative diplomacy and preventive action in various areas — such as demobilization, disarmament and reintegration, security-sector reform and human rights aimed at preventing and resolving conflicts — can support complex political transitions and maintain peace among national stakeholders.

In that context, there is a clear trend towards increasing women's participation. As such, those tools have the immediate goal of mitigating the triggers and impacts of violent conflict, while seeking to build peace and move towards the long-term objectives of prevention and lasting peace. In that respect, we believe that women's participation is crucial in order to increase effectiveness. We also commend the efforts of the Secretary-General with regard to the zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse.

We welcomed the launch of the African Women Leaders Network in May in New York. We also reiterate that we are pleased to see the high degree of integration of the issue of women into the peace and security architecture of the African Union. Indeed, commendable efforts have been made in the African Union to integrate objectives relating to women and peace and security into its mechanisms for security and human rights protection, as well as its crisis-response and peacebuilding strategies, including, inter alia, the promotion of women's access to positions such as peace mediators, election observers and gender advisers.

Djibouti has long worked to adopt measures relating to women's economic empowerment, governance and justice. Many sectoral public policies in that regard have been implemented and featured in the national programme on gender. Article 1 of our Constitution establishes equality between men and women with respect to civic and political rights. Since 2013, our Parliament has had a 12 per cent representation of women. In public administration, thanks to a legal framework and the political will for equal participation, women now represent some 25 per cent of the workforce. Finally, Djiboutian women are participating in peacekeeping missions, in particular in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the African Union Mission in Somalia.

As affirmed by the Beijing Declaration in the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women,

> "Women's equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspective at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved."

Currently, we in Djibouti are initiating the preparation of a project aimed at the creation of a gender observatory. That project consists, on the one hand, of collecting, analysing and disseminating data relating to gender equality, and on the other, of making recommendations that will inform decision-makers in their decision-making and, consequently, the development of public policies to promote and improve the situation of gender equality in our country.

To conclude, the topic debated today — about which predictions indicate that the road ahead is fraught with difficulties, but also that the obstacles are by no means insurmountable — provides us with an excellent opportunity and means of eradicating the root causes of conflicts and strengthening conflict prevention. We can and must collectively work with vigour to implement the elements and recommendations of the global study in that regard.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Azerbaijan.

Ms. Mehdiyeva (Azerbaijan): At the outset, I would like to commend the French presidency for holding this important open debate on women and peace and security. We also thank the briefers for their statements.

The women and peace and security agenda has gained significant momentum since resolution 1325 (2000) was adopted. As such, the Security Council has paid increasing attention to the issue by acknowledging that combating impunity, addressing past violations and asserting the principles of the rule of law underpin efforts to build peace and stability. Among other areas, it is important to continue paying close attention to the gender consequences of the breakdown of the rule of law during and after conflict.

While genuine strides have been made in strengthening the political will and international legal framework needed to secure justice and deal with conflict-related sexual violence, there is still a need for greater focus on the full range of violations and serious crimes experienced by women, including such matters as forced disappearances, foreign occupation, mass forced displacements and the destruction of civilian infrastructure. There must be no tolerance for such acts. Combating impunity and strengthening the responses of both international and national justice are critically important in that regard.

Against that backdrop, it is curious that the representative of Armenia — the country that bears primary responsibility for unleashing the war and perpetrating the aggression against Azerbaijan and has been carrying out ethnic cleansing on a massive scale and committing other serious crimes during the conflict, including against women and children — should take the floor in the Security Council, and attempt to lecture others and voice groundless accusations against my country.

Suffice it to say that the attack and capture of the town Khojaly in the Nagorno Karabakh region of Azerbaijan in February 1992 involved the brutal killing of hundreds of Azerbaijanis, including 83 children and 106 women. Thousands of civilians were wounded and taken hostage, and many remain missing. The town was razed to the ground, and the level of brutality in Khojaly was indeed shocking. Atrocities included scalping, beheading, the bayoneting of pregnant women and mutilation of bodies. Seventy-eight of the mutilated were minors. Six families were exterminated Twenty-five children lost both parents, and 130 children lost one parent. The impunity still enjoyed by the perpetrators of the crimes committed in the course of the Armenian aggression not only impedes progress in achieving the long-awaited peace and reconciliation process, but also aggravates the situation on the ground.

In April of last year, the armed forces of Armenia stepped up their firing from their positions in the occupied territories, thereby subjecting the armed forces of Azerbaijan along the line of contact and the adjacent densely populated areas under the control of Azerbaijan to intense fire with heavy artillery and large-calibre weapons. As a result, 34 towns and villages in Azerbaijan were shelled, causing casualties among civilians, as well as destroying or substantially damaging private and public property, including residences, schools and kindergartens.

Armenia should therefore be the last to comment on such notions as women and peace and security and human rights. Azerbaijan will continue its efforts to eliminate the consequences of the Armenian aggression, with a view to achieving a political settlement of the conflict based on international law and ensuring peace and justice in the region.

The meeting rose at 8.20 p.m.